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ABSTRACT

The 10 issues of IDRA Newsletter published in 1999 focus on education in Texas and on educational issues concerning minority, low-income, or bilingual students. Feature articles include: "Lost: $319 Billion and 1.2 Million Students" (Texas dropouts); "Breathing New Life into Language Assessment"; "Missing: Texas Youth--Dropout and Attrition Rates in Texas Public High Schools (an Excerpt)"; "Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs in Texas: What Is Known, What Is Needed (an Excerpt)"; "Project Alianza: Tapping Community Resources for Bilingual Teachers"; "Are We Making Educated Choices about Educating Our Children?"; "From 'DAC' to 'EAC': The Expanding Role of the Equity Assistance Center"; "Failing Our Children: Finding Alternatives to In-Grade Retention"; "The Use of Public Money for Private Schooling: Listening to Parents"; "Math and Science Education: A Practical Equity Guide"; "Sexual Harassment: What Parents and Students Should Know"; "For Our Children: Preserving Our Neighborhood Public Schools" (opposition to vouchers); "Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program: The Value of Video Conferencing"; "Read It Again! How To Select Quality Literature for Young Children"; "The Anti-Social Promotion Bandwagon: Riding Down the Campaign Trail"; "Legislature Grapples with Reform Issues: A Texas Policy Update"; "Two-Way Bilingual Programs: The Demand for a Multilingual Workforce"; "Parents Organizing Bilingual Education Advocates: Parent Institutes as a Strategy"; "Origins of Public Education and the Voucher Debate"; "Characteristics of a School That Is Safe and Responsive to All Children"; "Educational Technology: An Update"; "Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program: Preparing Leaders for the New Millennium"; "Project Flair: Working Together for a Better Learning Environment"; "Appropriate Language Instruction: Stephanie's Story"; "Litigation on Vouchers"; "Texas Legislative Update"; "A Model Teacher Preparation and Leadership Development Initiative: First Year Findings"; "What a Difference a Year Made"; "Extending Advanced Skills Instruction into the Education of Disadvantaged Students"; "Community Supports Public Schools, Opposes Vouchers"; "Significant and Worthwhile Changes in Educational Evaluation: Putting Value in Evaluation"; "Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program Participants Testify before Congressional Committee";

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"More Students Served in Bilingual and ESL Programs but More LEP Students Assigned to Special Education"; "Attrition Rates in Texas Public High Schools Still High"; Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program: Still Getting Great Results"; "Lessons Learned, Lessons Shared: An Excerpt" (immigrant education); "Alternative Education Programs in Texas: More Questions than Answers"; "Educating a New Generation: A Reflection on the Process"; "IDRA Content Area Program Enhancement: A Contribution for Limited-English-Proficient Students"; and "Texas Schools Have Support for Comprehensive School Reform". (Includes a cumulative index.) (SV)

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IDRA Newsletter

Maria Robledo Montecel, Ed.
Christie L. Goodman, Ed.

Volume XXVI
1999

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RC 022 178

INTERCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

Celebrating 25 Years
1973-1998

IDRA Newsletter

ISSN 1069-5672 *Volume XXVI, No. 1 January 1999*

Lost: $319 Billion and 1.2 Million Students

María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel, Ph.D.

Inside this Issue:

- ✧ **Instructional language assessment**
- ✧ **Equity assistance available**
- ✧ **Disciplinary alternative education**
- ✧ **Missing: Texas Youth**

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Editor's Note: In early January, Dr. María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel, IDRA executive director, presented the following remarks to the Texas State Board of Education Committee on Planning.

In 1986, the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) conducted the first comprehensive statewide study of school dropouts in Texas. Using a high school attrition formula, IDRA estimated that 86,000 students had not graduated from Texas public schools that year, costing the state $17.12 billion in foregone income, lost tax revenues and increased criminal justice, welfare, unemployment and job training costs.

By 1998 – 12 years later – the estimated cumulative number of Texas school dropouts has grown to **more than 1.2 million.** Because these students were unable to complete high school, **the state of Texas loses $319 billion**.

While much has been said about reducing the dropout rate, little has been accomplished. IDRA's annual estimates show that **the attrition rate of 33 percent in 1985-86 has increased to 42 percent in 1997-98.** The Texas Education Code directs the state to achieve a longitudinal dropout rate of 5 percent by 1997-98. In December 1995, this board restated that goal in its *Long Range Plan for Public Education 1996-2000.* It is now 1999, and by all estimates (including those of the Texas Education Agency) we have fallen far short of meeting the goal. We have failed our youth.

It is the responsibility of this board and this state to assure that the goal of a 5 percent or less longitudinal dropout rate is met. To do that, we must have an accurate picture of where we are, where we are going and how we are to get there.

As a starting point, the state must collect accurate longitudinal dropout data. Texas has made significant strides in developing an accountability system, one that is being looked to as a national model. However, without accurate longitudinal dropout data tied to the accountability system, it is easy to wrongly conclude that the dropout issue is either solved, minimal or affects only minority children.

IDRA research shows that the dropout issue has not been solved, is not minimal and affects students of all colors. **One out of three White students** and **one out of two African American students and Hispanic students** who were in the ninth grade in 1994-95 were not enrolled in high school in 1997-98 (what would have been their 12th grade year).

This problem has not gone away. It cannot be solved by the changing methodologies, the obtuse dropout definitions and dropout "recovery" adjustments that have characterized efforts to date.

Since 1987, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) has been calculating annual dropout rates, and during the last few years longitudinal rates have been estimated. The agency had the data necessary to calculate an actual longitudinal dropout rate with the 1996 dropout data collection, but instead

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"This state has suffered from a focus on lowering the dropout numbers as opposed to lowering the number of dropouts."

Lost: $319 Billion - continued from page 1

explored the calculation and use of a school completion rate. The Texas Education Code mandates the calculation of a "longitudinal dropout rate." The state must comply with this mandate.

The accuracy of an actual longitudinal dropout rate depends on how "dropouts" are defined and how dropout rates are calculated.

This state has suffered from a focus on lowering the dropout numbers as opposed to lowering the number of dropouts. This has resulted in changing definitions, unverified school data, and adjusted dropout calculations that mask and understate the severity of the dropout problem in Texas. The inaccuracy of the counting and reporting was underscored by the July 1996 review of TEA by the Texas state auditor. As a result of inaccurate calculations, the state auditor estimated that the 1994 *actual* dropout rate was more than double the 1994 *reported* rate. As recently as 1998, the state auditor advised that underreporting of dropouts must continue to be addressed by TEA.

Simply put, a dropout is a student who was enrolled in a Texas school, has left school without earning a high school diploma and is not enrolled in any school, within or outside of Texas.

Changing the definition does not change the reality. It is the case that students who leave school and eventually get GEDs are not high school graduates and do not have the same options in life as high school graduates. Not counting them as dropouts, as the state is currently doing, does not improve their life chances or benefit the economic productivity of the state. The same is true for students who have passed their high school course requirements and not passed the TAAS. These students are denied a diploma but are not currently counted as dropouts.

Furthermore, not counting students as dropouts by "recovering" them on paper only is self-deception and does not ensure the students will graduate. Over a six-year period, this "recovery" rate increased from 7.6 percent in 1990-91 to 35 percent in 1997-98, with the consequent decrease of the reported dropout rate. The recovery rate increased and the reported dropout rate decreased, for example, by removing from the dropout count and adding to the recovery count students who have received a GED or are enrolled in a GED program, students who have completed their high school course requirements but have not passed the TAAS, and students who left school to go to jail. The reality is that not a single student received a high school diploma as a result of these so-called recovery efforts.

What is needed is a state longitudinal dropout rate that follows groups of individual students (cohorts) over a period of time and determines what happened to them. Students who have received a GED or are enrolled in a GED program and students who have completed their high school course requirements but are denied a high school diploma for failure to pass the TAAS should be counted as dropouts. The school leaver codes that the agency has begun to use will provide insight on reasons students are leaving school. They should not be used to artificially lower dropout rates.

The availability of accurate longitudinal data on school dropouts, tied to the Academic Excellence Indicator System, is critical to maintaining the credibility of the school accountability system. It is also critical to informing urgently needed strategic dropout prevention and recovery efforts.

We urge this board to take all steps necessary to assure that a credible accounting of dropouts is established and maintained by ensuring that policies and procedures result in: an accurate longitudinal dropout rate, appropriate school leaver codes that define dropouts and verifiable reporting procedures.

Failure to take these steps has already cost the state $319 billion and 1.2 million students. This state cannot afford further

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The Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) is a non-profit organization with a 501(c)(3) tax exempt status. The purpose of the organization is to disseminate information concerning equality of educational opportunity.

The *IDRA Newsletter* (ISSN 1069-5672, © 1999) serves as a vehicle for communication with educators, school board members, decision-makers, parents, and the general public concerning the educational needs of all children in Texas and across the United States.

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Breathing New Life into Language Assessment

Pam McCollum, Ph.D.

I have worked in the area of language assessment for many years, primarily teaching university graduate students who are teachers of English language learners in public schools. I have always found language assessment to be stimulating as an academic subject. But it is challenging to teach due to the gap between linguistic theory and its application in the classroom, which requires making decisions about language-minority students' learning. Also, most texts do not address instructional language assessment for language-minority students. Texts are generally long on theory and short on examples of classroom assessment.

Last semester I used a CD-ROM, *Instructional Language Assessment* by Dr. Sandra Fradd of the University of Florida, that breathed new life into the course. It allowed me to re-conceptualize how to include a practicum in a course where most students are teachers who study at night and teach during the day. The students enjoyed using the CD-ROM because it provided a novel way to cover content and have it illustrated.

Instructional Language Assessment is multifaceted and makes instructional language assessment "come alive" with video and audio clips of English language learners using English in the classroom. The CD-ROM can be used with Macintosh and Windows and is authored by HyperStudio. It is comprised of 14 "stacks" (equivalent to 14 book chapters) and includes a manual in PFD format that can be accessed by Adobe Acrobat Reader software.

The self-paced design of the CD-ROM makes it an appropriate review for those with experience in the area as well as those just beginning the study of language assessment. The user can click on highlighted vocabulary items to review their definitions or choose to skip them. Even those using the CD-ROM for review will enjoy viewing the video clips of students that are presented as examples of proficiency level designations. While the clips are short, they do an excellent job of illustrating their point.

The first six chapters cover basic concepts related to bilingual language assessment. The approach emphasizes collecting varying types of information about how students communicate in meaningful situations in a variety of contexts. The assessment process is based on assessing general language proficiency as well as narrative and expository skills in oral and written discourse.

The fifth stack presents a case study of a student who is described (as well as seen and heard). The case study emphasizes the importance of forming a hypothesis about what is known about the student prior to assessment and determining a plan of action for collecting additional information through observation of the student in multiple contexts and through collaboration with others in the school who work with the student.

Stacks seven through 14 deal with assessment in its applied context. These chapters provide a step-by-step explanation of how to conduct an assessment from the initial stage of eliciting oral language, to analysis and interpretation of data through guidelines for writing a summary report. I found this section to be the CD-ROM's most valuable feature. The types of suggestions offered here generally are not found in texts. They are only gained through extensive experience in collecting and analyzing students' language in classrooms. These materials were developed primarily through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education and were field tested and reviewed by groups of teachers, language assessment specialists and researchers for a period of five years.

"Instructional Language Assessment" is a valuable resource and has the potential to provide a unifying frame for assessment that can be used to plan instruction and make appropriate decisions regarding the education of English language learners.

Another strong point of *Instructional Language Assessment* is that assessment results always should be tied to instruction. The author focuses on levels of narrative development and functional language ability within the language proficiency rubric as well as presenting a continuum of developmental language proficiency levels side by side with a list of key instructional features that correspond to each proficiency level rating. My students found the juxtaposition of developmental levels and corresponding key instructional features useful in designing tasks for collecting language samples and for making recommendations for subsequent instruction. Even very experienced bilingual teachers commented on the usefulness of having connections made between proficiency levels and instructional activities.

The manual that accompanies the CD-ROM is also very useful. The rationale for the material in each chapter is presented along with content notes that require students to supply relevant information or apply the material in some way after viewing the stack. It also contains examples of students' writing, transcripts of oral proficiency samples and useful rubrics to evaluate students through observation or evaluation of written samples.

Instructional Language Assessment is a valuable resource and has the potential to provide a unifying frame for assessment that can be used to plan instruction and make appropriate decisions regarding the education of English language learners. For that reason, it is a valuable resource for classroom teachers of language-minority students as well as speech-language pathologists and school psychologists.

I recommend *Instructional Language Assessment* most highly and look forward to using it again in my classes. I feel it has the potential to vastly improve the assessment and *instruction* of English language learn-

Breathing New Life - continued on page 8

Missing: Texas Youth – Dropout and Attrition Rates in Texas Public High Schools (An Excerpt)

Missing: Texas Youth – Dropout and Attrition Rates in Texas Public High Schools presents an in-depth look at the dropout issue in Texas. It is presented against a backdrop of the 1986 legislation that mandated schools and the state education agency ensure that at least 95 percent of Texas' youth receive their high school diplomas. This IDRA policy brief also provides some answers to keeping students in school and recommendations that, if followed, will provide the "real" numbers of students missing from our schools. This, in turn, should compel anyone with a conscience to change the state's failure rate. The recommendations and key findings are reprinted below.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on 12 years of research by the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) and others on Texas dropout rates, state and local district identification, counting and reporting procedures.

- Revise the goal of the state dropout program to comply with the mandate: "The goal of the program shall be to reduce the actual statewide *longitudinal* dropout rate to not more than 5 percent, such that a minimum of 95 percent of any class of students enrolling in Texas public schools will receive their high school diploma."
  - ◇ *Rationale:* The current statewide longitudinal dropout rate does not comply with the legislative mandate.
- Modify state policy requirements so that a "dropout" is defined as follows: "A student is defined as a dropout if the student enrolled in Texas public schools does not receive a high school diploma and for whom the state has no proof of re-enrollment in a school within or outside of Texas that has the authority to grant high school diplomas." The definition should not include students enrolled in Texas public schools who:
  - are enrolled in school-based General Education Development (GED) programs,
  - have successfully completed all high school course requirements but have not passed the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) test, and
  - foreign students who are reported as returning to their home country, but for whom there is no verification of enrollment by a receiving school.
  - ◇ *Rationale:* The current dropout definition *excludes* in the calculation of school dropouts students who receive a GED and students who have failed the TAAS but passed their high school course requirements, as well as students who were thought to have returned to their home country but for whom there is no verification. All of these students do not have a high school diploma and therefore should be defined as dropouts. Exclusion of such students tends to misrepresent and seriously understate the dropout counts.
- Require each public school district in Texas, on a yearly basis, to report to the state education agency the number of students enrolled in Texas public schools who:
  - are enrolled in school-based GED programs,
  - have successfully completed all high school course requirements but have not passed the TAAS, and
  - foreign students who are reported as returning to their home country, but for whom there is no verification.

  These students should be reported separately and not be included in the dropout definition.
  - ◇ *Rationale:* It is currently difficult to determine exactly how many students fall into these categories and are not receiving their high school diplomas. In addition, the inclusion of these students in the dropout rate tends to overstate the actual high school completion rate in Texas schools.
- Modify the state education agency procedure for computing the actual state longitudinal dropout rate. The following computation is an example of how the rate could be calculated:

  The state longitudinal dropout rate is calculated by determining the total number of students enrolled in Texas public schools in seventh grade and subtracting the total number of those same students receiving a high school diploma five years later, excluding students who will not graduate but are still enrolled in the regular school program that leads to acquiring a high school diploma (such as students who were retained or do not have sufficient credits), divided by the number of pupils in the original seventh grade group and multiplying by 100 to determine the percentage.
  - ◇ *Rationale:* The current state longitudinal dropout rate is an *estimated* rate and must be an *actual* rate.
- Require that each local school district establish local dropout oversight committee(s) or task force(s) including parent representatives, private sector representatives and school staff. These committees should regularly and systematically monitor the dropout identification, counting and reporting process and dropout prevention efforts at their campuses and districts. Such efforts should be part of the regular school program involving regular school staff.
  - ◇ *Rationale:* There is currently no local oversight committee to monitor the local dropout reporting or intervention. Schools and communities must be directly involved in addressing the issue.
- Require that the state education agency establish a site monitoring team that is responsible for maintaining the integrity of the statewide dropout data. A trigger mechanism should be developed for the team to review cases where the district attrition rate is more than 10 percent of their reported dropout rate.

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IDRA Policy Briefs to be Released Soon

The Intercultural Development Research Association is developing a series of policy briefs on four key issues in education. The series will be released in late January 1999 to inform community and policy decisions during the Texas legislative session.

The series and associated data will be available on-line at www.idra.org.

Topics Include:

✓ ***Disciplinary alternative education programs***
✓ ***Dropout and attrition in Texas public high schools***
✓ ***In-grade retention***
✓ ***Use of public money for private schooling***

For more information, contact the IDRA Institute for Policy and Leadership, Dr. Albert Cortez, director, at 5835 Callaghan Road, Suite 350 • San Antonio, Texas 78228-1190 • phone 210/684-8180 • fax 210/684-5389

Missing: Texas Youth *– continued from page 4*

  - *Rationale:* There is currently no "trigger mechanism" for reviewing discrepancies in district dropout rates. Limitations in agency review efforts preclude effective oversight and may contribute to gross underreporting.
- Require that the state education agency collect information on the reasons students drop out of school in a way that significantly decreases the number of "unknown" reasons for dropping out. Information should also include data on *school-related dropout factors* such as school retention rates, school faculty attrition, credentials and experience, and school per-pupil expenditures.
  - *Rationale:* There is currently no information on the reasons students drop out of school for approximately half of those students who are identified as dropouts.
- Require that the state education agency collect and disseminate information on local districts' dropout prevention and recovery efforts. This should include proven strategies used and evidence of effectiveness in lowering the dropout rate.
  - *Rationale:* Given the high number of dropouts, proven strategies for lowering the dropout rates must be shared across districts.

Findings at a Glance

The latest IDRA attrition findings reveal some alarming facts. Major findings include the following.

- From 1985-86 to 1997-98 more than 1.2 million students have been lost from Texas public schools to attrition.
- Because these students were unable to complete high school, the state of Texas loses $319 billion in foregone income, lost tax revenues and increased criminal justice, welfare, unemployment and job training costs.
- Comparison of IDRA attrition trend data and Texas Education Agency (TEA) dropout estimates differ radically in the assessment of the state's dropout problem. This difference is not explained merely by differences in calculation procedures.
- Two of every five students (42 percent) enrolled in the ninth grade in Texas public schools during the 1994-95 school year failed to reach and/or complete the 12th grade in the 1997-98 school year.
- One of every two Hispanic students and African American students from the 1994-95 ninth grade class never reached the 12th grade, compared to one of every three White students.
- Racial and ethnic minority group students were more likely than White non-Hispanic students to be lost from public school enrollment. Nearly half of African American students (49 percent) and Hispanic students (54 percent) were lost from public school enrollment between the 1994-95 and 1997-98 school years compared to about 31 percent of White non-Hispanic students. African American students were 1.6 times more likely to be lost from enrollment than were White students, while Hispanic students were 1.7 times more likely to be lost from public high school enrollment than were White students.
- More males than females were lost from public high school enrollment. Between the 1994-95 and 1997-98 school years, more males (45 percent) than females (38 percent) were lost from public high school enrollment.
- The attrition rate was highest in major urban districts (51 percent) and lowest in rural districts (28 percent) in the 1996-97 school year.
- Since 1986 (the 1985-86 to 1997-98 school years), the number of students (ninth grade through 12th grade) lost from public school enrollment has *increased*. The number of students lost from public school enrollment in Texas has increased from about 86,000 in the 1985-86 school year to about 151,000 in the 1997-98 school year.
- The statewide attrition rate has increased by 27 percent (from 33 percent in the 1985-86 school year to 42 percent in the 1997-98 school year).

For a copy of "Missing: Texas Youth – Dropout and Attrition Rates in Texas Public High Schools," contact the IDRA Institute for Policy and Leadership, Dr. Albert Cortez, director, at 210/684-8180 or view the policy brief and related tables on-line at www.idra.org.

No-cost Technical Assistance and Training Available

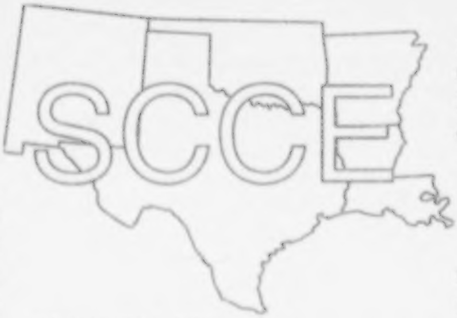
Bradley Scott, M.A.

We are quickly approaching the 21st century, and there are so many things we are striving for in public schools to prepare students to meet the challenges of a new millennium. We are transforming schools, working to create equity and excellence, striving for all students to reach high academic outcomes, and collaborating with parents and community people in new and important ways to re-create schools to work better for all learners regardless of their race, sex, national origin and economic status. The challenges are large, but we can meet them if we work together to support each others' success.

The IDRA Desegregation Assistance Center – South Central Collaborative for Equity is now called the IDRA South Central Collaborative for Equity. This change of name reflects the changing focus of the center's work in support of local education agencies that are committed to making schools work for all learners. The focus will no longer simply be directed toward school districts that are trying to reduce minority isolation through desegregation of schools and programs. The focus now becomes broader to include the goals of desegregation and educational equity.

The center will continue to assist schools in reducing minority isolation, improving interracial relations and contact, and improving achievement for minority students. But it is expanding to embrace the creation of reformed schools that move all learners to high standards of academic excellence regardless of race, sex, national origin and economic status, and the preparation of all learners to operate competently in a diverse, multilingual, technologically complex society.

This new focus means that districts with a diverse student population do not have to be involved in a desegregation effort (voluntary or imposed) in order to receive technical assistance and training from the IDRA center that is absolutely free to them. The eligibility criterion is that the district is working to reform schools to work for all learners to achieve high academic standards regardless of their race, sex, national origin and economic status.



School districts can receive two to three days of free technical assistance and training from the South Central Collaborative for Equity by completing the form below and returning it to the address provided. The types of assistance and training include staff development, materials development, strategic planning, classroom demonstrations, observations and collaboration, focus group and development team assistance, and other forms of assistance that you may specify to meet your local needs and concerns. IDRA staff can deliver this assistance and training to teachers, administrators, non-certified personnel, parents, students, school board members and members of the community.

It is important that we work together to give every student an equitable opportunity to achieve. The center is eager to support you in that effort. It is up to you to request the support. Together, we can make a difference for students in schools.

Bradley Scott is a senior education associate in the IDRA Division of Professional Development, where he directs the IDRA South Central Collaborative for Equity. Comments and questions may be directed to him via e-mail at idra@idra.org.

For More Information

To request training, technical assistance or other information, complete the form below and send it to the South Central Collaborative for Equity at IDRA (address below).

My school district would like to:

☐ Know more about IDRA.

☐ Discuss the South Central Collaborative for Equity's services in more detail.

Name

Title

School, District or Agency

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South Central Collaborative for Equity
Intercultural Development Research Association
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Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs in Texas – What is Known; What is Needed (An Excerpt)

The Texas legislature established a policy in 1995 requiring school districts to have an "alternative educational setting for behavioral management." Students can be removed from their school and sent to the alternative program if they:

- Engage in conduct punishable as a felony.
- Commit a series of specified serious offenses while on school property or attending a school-sponsored activity.
- Commit other violations specified in student "codes of conduct" developed by individual school districts.

A picture of success would show students who have committed such offenses receiving the appropriate personal attention they need while they are learning in school. We would see qualified, dedicated adults providing that support to students. We would see formerly disruptive students who are now learning and achieving in school.

We would even probably see a reduction in violence in public schools that can be attributed to this strategy. We would definitely see schools and alternative programs that are accountable for results.

The following is an excerpt from a policy brief, *Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs in Texas – What is Known; What is Needed*, by IDRA that examines the details of how this idea has been carried out in Texas. From the little information that is available, however, we see a very different picture emerging. The most critical concern is that we actually know very little about these new alternative programs. The pendulum has swung. For the most part, alternative educational programs are being used as dumping grounds for "undesirable" students who, once there, get little or no support.

The solution does not lie at either end of the dilemma; it lies somewhere in between. As a nation and in the state of Texas, we can have both. We can find the best way to deal with violence and crime in our schools, and we *can* have excellence and equity in education for all children.

We can and we must.

Recommendations

Based on the research presented in this policy brief, IDRA recommends the following.

- The decision to refer a student to a disciplinary alternative education program (DAEP) should be made in conjunction with a student's parents, with all options available to them clearly delineated before the school imposes a referral.
- The Texas Education Agency (TEA) should expand the data collected on DAEPs to include more information on referring teachers and schools, data on DAEP staffs and curriculum, and follow-up data on students' academic and disciplinary status.
- Local districts should have the option of operating DAEPs that do not isolate referred students from other students, particularly those referred for less serious offenses.
- TEA should review districts operating DAEPs for numbers of referrals, with on-site state agency reviews triggered when minimal threshold referral levels are exceeded.
- School districts and TEA should compile academic achievement and disciplinary referral data on all DAEP students at least annually, with reports submitted to the local school board and community.
- TEA should hold DAEPs to the same accountability standards applicable to all public schools in Texas.
- DAEPs should be familiar with and should structure their activities to be consistent with research on effective DAEPs.
- Disciplinary action options available to schools should be different for elementary, middle and high school students. Districts should be prohibited from operating DAEPs involving classrooms with students from different school levels (elementary school, middle school and high school).
- TEA should expand local and state dropout reporting data to include summary reports on dropout statistics for students referred to DAEPs.

Findings at a Glance

Origins and Intent of the Texas Policy

- Teacher organizations developed the concept of DAEPs. Teachers wanted the right to remove any pupil they felt was "disruptive" or interfering with their attempt to deliver instruction in the classroom.
- The policy establishing such programs was promoted as a safety issue for teachers and compliant students.

Research Basis of the Texas Policy

- Policy makers did not examine comprehensive research studies of effective alternative programs before designing DAEPs.
- Some limited data on characteristics of successful DAEPs is emerging. But there is little evidence comparing such programs to practices less severe or less disruptive than removing students from their home campuses.
- Anecdotal reports on exceptional programs exist, but there are no conclusive studies on the effectiveness of such programs for students forced to participate.

Implementation

Almost 73,000 students were removed from their classrooms.

- The number of students subjected to removal to a DAEP grew from 70,958 in 1995-96 to 72,997 in 1996-97, a net increase of 2,039 (3 percent).
- The number of removals decreased from 99,381 in 1995-96 to 98,233 in 1996-97, a decline of 1,148 or 1 percent (fewer students were removed more than once in a school year).

Disciplinary – continued on page 8

Disciplinary *- continued from page 7*

Only one-fourth of the students were sent to DAEPs for serious offenses.

- Almost three-fourths of all DAEP removals were for violations of local school codes of conduct rather than for major offenses specified in the state law. School officials are using the Texas DAEP program to remove students for reasons other than those emphasized during state policy consideration. District discretion accounts for 73.8 percent of all student referrals to DAEPs in Texas. The number decreased from 73,302 out of 99,381 (73.8 percent) in 1995-96 to 69,125 of 98,223 (70.3 percent) in 1996-97.

The majority of students sent to DAEPs were minority students.

- The majority of students referred to Texas DAEP programs were minority students, with Hispanic students referred at levels above the percentage that they constitute of the statewide student population.
- In 1995-96, Hispanic students accounted for 40.9 percent, African American students for 21.8 percent, White students for 27.8 percent, and other students for 1 percent of all DAEP referrals.
- In 1996-97, minority students continued this disproportionate representation, with Hispanic students comprising 39.1 percent of all removals, African American students 22.2 percent, White students 27.7 percent, and other students 1.1 percent.

There was a dramatic increase in reports by schools that referred students' race or ethnicity was "unknown."

- The number of DAEP students whose racial or ethnic origins were classified as "unknown" increased from 1,230 (1.8 percent) in 1995-96 to 7,235 (9.9 percent) in 1996-97.
- The growth in the number of "unknown" students resulted in a questionable reduction in the percentages of Hispanic and White students removed to DAEPs, while the African American percentages held constant.

Low-income students and students in special education programs were more likely to be sent to DAEPs.

- For the first time, the TEA report showed percentages of DAEP removals by income last year. Low-income pupils comprised 54.6 percent of all removals, a percentage that exceeds the group's proportion of the state's overall enrollment (48.1 percent).
- Surprisingly, 21 percent of DAEP removals involved special education pupils, about three times their proportion of the state enrollment.
- TEA's summary data show that 58.9 percent of DAEP referrals involved students considered "at risk." Ironically, since referral to DAEPs is now a basis for reclassifying pupils as "at risk," that number will no doubt increase in subsequent years' reports.

At least 841 of 1,044 school districts removed students to DAEPs.

- TEA surveyed 1,044 districts in 1995-96. Of those, 841 reported DAEP referrals, 184 reported zero referrals, and 19 did not respond. A 1996-97 survey of 1,059 districts showed that 764 reported referrals. Data was not available on how many districts did not respond to the 1996-97 survey, so the referral number may actually be higher.

Student Outcomes

- Unfortunately, many programs collect little data on effectiveness compared to student achievement or discipline. Too often, DAEP successes are reported through collections of anecdotes, with little or no "hard data" collected, tabulated or analyzed.
- TEA and local school districts collected only minimal data: numbers of students referred, limited information on student characteristics (e.g., age, ethnicity) and reasons for removal from regular campuses.

Accountability

- Critical DAEP referral information is neither required nor collected. No data is available on:
  - Which teachers are referring students.
  - Campuses from which students are referred.

  TEA staff members reported major difficulties in making those determinations even if they were to link the report data to the more comprehensive individual student Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS).
- The accountability system established for DAEP programs in Texas differs from accountability procedures established for regular schools and school districts.

For a copy of "Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs in Texas – What is Known; What is Needed," contact the IDRA Institute for Policy and Leadership, Dr. Albert Cortez, director, at 210/684-8180 or view the policy brief and related tables on-line at www.idra.org.

Lost: $319 Billion *- continued from page 2*

losses in human capital and economic productivity.

As you proceed, please know that IDRA is available to work with you and continues to be available to serve as a resource to the agency and the state legislature at this important juncture.

Dr. María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel is the executive director of the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA). Comments and questions may be directed to her via e-mail at idra@idra.org

Breathing New Life *- continued from page 3*

ers. More information on *Instructional Language Assessment* is available via the Internet at www.atlantic.net/~sfradd/info/html.

Dr. Pam McCollum is a senior education associate in the IDRA Division of Professional Development. Comments and questions may be directed to her via e-mail at idra@idra.org.

A Jump on Tomorrow

Sixth Annual IDRA

La Semana del Niño

The Week of the Young Child

Early Childhood Educator's Institute™

Monday
Pre-institute seminar on dual language programs.

• • • • • • • • • • • • • •

Tuesday
Morning session led by Dr. María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel, IDRA executive director. Dr. Josefina Tinajero will be the keynote speaker. A series of concurrent sessions will be held in the morning and again in the afternoon. At another location, hundreds of early childhood educators from across the state will focus on working with families in a distance learning session via video conference. Book signing and wine and cheese reception in the evening with author Terri Ybañez.

• • • • • • • • • • • • • •

Wednesday
School visits in the morning. Dr. Antonio Gonzalez will present a session on brain research and literacy. The "Technology Fest" concurrent sessions will be held in the afternoon.

• • • • • • • • • • • • • •

Thursday
School visits in the morning followed by special sessions on reading fun and early literacy. The conference will close with a luncheon featuring keynote speaker Rebeca María Barrera, president of the National Latino Children's Institute.

Meet nationally-known facilitators!
Interact with other early childhood educators!
Visit schools showcasing innovative programs!
Take home lots of ideas for your classroom!
Enjoy San Antonio during Fiesta!
Meet author Terri Ybañez!

April 20 through April 22, 1999
San Antonio Airport Hilton
Presented by: Intercultural Development Research Association

School Visits

Take this opportunity to visit model early childhood centers. Institute participants will travel to high-performing, high-minority sites in the San Antonio area that are effectively working with diverse learners. These include Head Start classrooms, dual language bilingual programs, a developmentally appropriate multi-age program, a Title I schoolwide program, a dual language magnet program and a national Blue Ribbon school.

Concurrent Sessions

Concurrent sessions will be held throughout the institute to provide participants with the latest on language and literacy development. The sessions will be led by practitioners who have tested strategies in the classroom. The sessions will also feature a "Technology Fest" that demonstrates ways of integrating technology into early childhood instruction.

Registration

Institute and Pre-institute: $150 each
Fee includes reception, institute and pre-institute sessions, school visits, and Monday and Thursday luncheons
Institute: $75 each
Fee includes reception, institute sessions, school visits, and Thursday luncheon
Pre-institute only: $75 each; fee includes luncheon
Reception only: $20 each
To register, contact IDRA for a registration form.

Pre-institute on Dual Language Programs

Monday, April 19, 1999

This pre-institute on literacy is designed to provide early childhood educators with a whole day of training and preparation focused on early childhood dual language programs. Featured speakers include: Irma Trujillo, Dr. Mari Riojas, and Dr. Adela Solis.

Hotel Information

The institute will be held at the San Antonio Airport Hilton. The deadline to receive the special room rate of $95 (single or double) plus state and local taxes is April 4. Reservations must be made by the participant. Call 1-800-HILTONS.

For more information or a registration brochure contact Hilaria Bauer or Carol Chavez at IDRA, 210/684-8180; e-mail: idra@idra.org.

Sponsored by the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA). Supporting IDRA projects include the South Central Collaborative for Equity (formerly called the Desegregation Assistance Center) and the STAR Center (the comprehensive regional assistance center that serves Texas via a collaboration of IDRA, the Dana Center at UT Austin and RMC Research Corporation).

IDRA Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program Tutors Travel from San Antonio to Washington, D.C.

Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutors from South San Antonio High School and Kazen Middle School pose at send-off ceremony at the airport before boarding their flight to Washington, D.C., for a Leadership Day with fellow tutors there.

Southwest Airlines sponsored 15 Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutors on its first nonstop flight from San Antonio to Baltimore-Washington International Airport. Tutors from South San Antonio High School and Kazen Middle School flew to Washington, D.C., in December to meet their fellow tutors in Washington, D.C., for the first time. All round-trip tickets for the flight were provided to the tutors and their chaperones by Southwest Airlines.

The tutors visited the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutors from Lincoln Middle School in the nation's capitol for a "Leadership Day" where they participated in team building and leadership activities. They also toured the city together. They had a private, guided tour through the White House arranged by Congressman Ciro Rodriguez; toured the National Air and Space Museum; rode subways and trains; and visited the Lincoln Monument and the Korean War and Viet-Nam Conflict Memorials. Reporters from two local television stations accompanied the tutors on their trip and then aired stories on their evening news later in the week.

A send-off ceremony was held for the San Antonio students at the airport boarding gate, with congratulatory remarks made by Congressman Ciro Rodriguez, South San Antonio Independent School District Superintendent Robert C. Zamora, and Pete Martinez representing the Coca-Cola Bottling Company of the Southwest.

"Our main objective is to keep students in school," Dr. Abelardo Villarreal, IDRA Director of Professional Development, told the crowd.

When asked by reporters what he got out of his experience in the program, 14-year-old Jesse Moreno said, "patience, more friends, and [the satisfaction of] knowing that you help them get a better grade or something." Jesse is a freshman at South San Antonio High School, and he tutors third grade students.

IDRA Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program Featured in Chicago

A national media event sponsored by The Coca-Cola Foundation was held in December to announce the implementation of the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program in Chicago. A community breakfast was held at Pilsen Elementary School and highlighted tutors from Benito Juarez High School. More than 60 school administrators, teachers and community members, as well as local newspaper, television and radio reporters attended the event.

"The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program is an example of how businesses can work together with educators to truly make a difference," said Paul Vallas, CEO of Chicago Public Schools. "The program is innovative in that students at risk of dropping out and often failing are tutoring younger students, and both groups are reaping the benefits of increased attendance, improved academic performance and decreased disciplinary problems. In this program everybody wins."

Tutors from Benito Juarez High School spoke about how the program has helped them develop better self-esteem and a reason to stay in school. An evaluation of participants at their school during the 1997 school year found that tutors attended school regularly and received less disciplinary action referrals – a decreased average from 2.7 to 1.6.

Parents also reported a positive change in their children's attitude or behavior toward school. According to parents, the program especially helped their children to be more responsible or mature, do homework, be a better student, have a positive attitude or behavior, stay out of trouble, be more interested in school and be more patient.

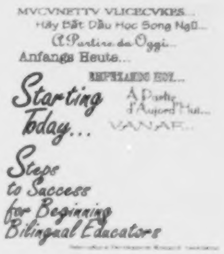
The program was introduced last year in five schools in Chicago: Benito Juarez High School, J.C. Orozco Community Academy, John Marshall High School, Pilsen Elementary School, and Faraday Elementary School.

The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, created by the IDRA, is an internationally-recognized cross-age tutoring program in schools across the United States, Puerto Rico, Great Britain and Brazil. For more than 14 years, IDRA and The Coca-Cola Foundation have worked together in a unique partnership that is making a visible difference in the lives of more than 68,500 children, families and educators. For more information contact Linda Cantu at IDRA at 210/684-8180 or idra@idra.org.

An IDRA Best Seller!

Starting Today...

Steps to Success for Beginning Bilingual Educators



What's Included ...

For far too long, school districts have allowed new teachers to "sink or swim" during their first year of teaching. This manual was developed to prevent new bilingual teachers from "sinking" during the stressful first year in what can be a most rewarding profession. ***Starting Today*** provides *concise information* on topics relevant to the bilingual classroom. Each section provides information that you will need at your fingertips during your first days, weeks and months in the classroom.

- **Rationale for Bilingual Education**
- **Guidelines for Bilingual Education Programs**
- **Managing the Bilingual Classroom**
- **Instructional Strategies for the Bilingual Classroom**
- **Planning Instruction in the Bilingual Classroom**
- **Resources for Bilingual Teachers**

$25 each. To order, send a check or purchase order to: IDRA, 5835 Callaghan Road, Suite 350, San Antonio, Texas 78228-1190; fax 210/684-5389; E-mail: idra@idra.org

- **130-page practical guide with vital information that new bilingual classroom teachers need to become effective teachers.**
- **Includes teacher-developed ideas and suggestions.**
- **Reviewed by educators involved in teacher preparation and alternative certification programs.**

HIGHLIGHTS OF RECENT IDRA ACTIVITIES

In October, IDRA worked with **8,649** teachers, administrators and parents through **104** training and technical assistance activities and **155** program sites in **12** states plus the United Kingdom. Topics included:

- Using the Internet to Teach Bilingual/ESL Students
- IDRA *Project FLAIR* (Focusing on Language and Academic Instructional Renewal)
- *Recognizing Cultural Differences in the Classroom*
- Sexual Harassment Prevention

Participating agencies and school districts included:

- District of Columbia Public Schools
- Houston Independent School District (ISD), Texas
- Blackwell Public Schools, Oklahoma
- Jefferson Parish Public Schools, Louisiana
- San Marcos ISD, Texas

Activity Snapshot

Title I of the *Improving America's Schools Act* requires school districts to provide gender equitable instruction to students. Recognizing its need to ensure that materials are free of gender-bias, one district in south Texas called upon the IDRA South Central Collaborative for Equity (formerly called the Desegregation Assistance Center). The center provided training to personnel in the school district to ensure that all children have more complete access to curriculum without the burden of cultural, linguistic and social bias that may occur in instructional materials. As a result, teachers in the district are better equipped to identify and respond to such bias.

Regularly, IDRA staff provides services to:

- public school teachers
- parents
- administrators
- other decision makers in public education

Services include:

- training and technical assistance
- evaluation
- serving as expert witnesses in policy settings and court cases
- publishing research and professional papers, books, videos and curricula

For information on IDRA services for your school district or other group, contact IDRA at 210/684-8180.

Challenges as We Enter a New Century: Valuing Communities

Celebrating 25 Years

For 25 years, IDRA has worked with communities in ways that recognize and value their diversity. We work directly and intensely with educators who teach children and adults, policy makers who directly impact the quality of schools and their access by all children; the broader community and families of children, especially those who most need high quality education to change the circumstances of their lives.

IDRA provided the San Antonio community with the facts about adult literacy in both 1980 and 1990. This information resulted in increased community efforts to more effectively serve adults in achieving literacy. Our recommendations provided the focus needed for increasing access to information and services, improving coordination of efforts, and refining training and instruction for educators and adults who are working to achieve literacy.

Through our work with the Children's Trust Fund, IDRA has listened to the voices of service providers and clients of child abuse prevention agencies in Texas. This has resulted in service providers having a greater awareness of and sensitivity to client needs.

IDRA's work with the San Antonio Community Education Leadership Program (CELP) is another example of our commitment to creating solutions for education through the community. Through CELP, IDRA models its vision by bringing together community members of diverse ethnicities from public and private institutions. The nine-month fellowship causes community leaders to experience and examine attitudes toward their own and others' cultures and explore the structures that promote cultural bias. This intense experience results in a greater commitment to capitalizing on and celebrating cultural diversity.

As part of the national One America initiative, IDRA coordinated community dialogues on racism in San Antonio in collaboration with CELP, City Year San Antonio and KLRN-TV9. The effort focused on three premises:

- San Antonio is a racially and ethnically diverse city.
- There are racial, social, economic and educational divides that still exist in our city.
- Things do not have to be this way; change does result from dialogue and action.

More than 600 people throughout the city participated to make it a more unified community.

IDRA sees disparities and has genuine concerns about the quality of education for our children and consistently values our community by providing accurate information and spurring leadership. We inform the community and raise the conscience and compassion of the community to resolve disparities and the results of historical racism. The issues we bring to the community are not easy or popular. When we take on projects that involve media, we are careful to present images that value the clients rather than demonize them. The messages we consistently push in our community work include:

- Literacy involvement brings opportunities.
- Our community can increase literacy.
- All people are valuable.

We can make our schools and communities work for everyone, when we work together.

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INTERCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT • RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

Celebrating 25 Years
1973-1998

IDRA Newsletter [illegible]

ISSN 1069-5672 **Volume XXVI, No. 2 February 1999**

Inside this Issue:

- ✧ **Listening to parents on vouchers**
- ✧ **Alternatives to in-grade retention**
- ✧ **Making educated decisions**
- ✧ **Expanding role of equity centers**

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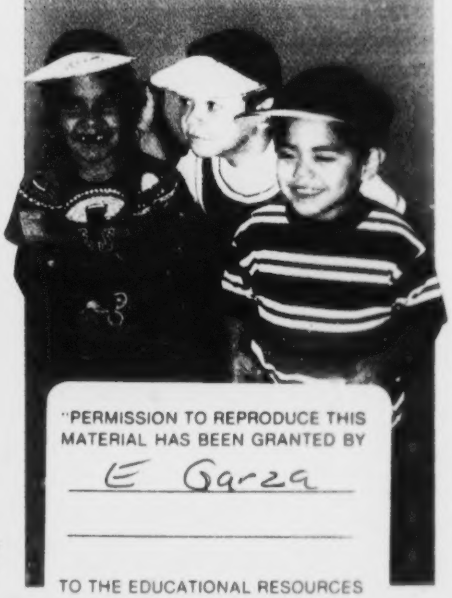

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Project Alianza:

Tapping Community Resources for Bilingual Teachers

Linda Cantu, M.A.

Project Alianza is an initiative funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to reconnect universities and other community assets in a strong and lasting alliance where they mutually seek solutions to barriers that affect the quality of education provided to Hispanic students. Our goal is to develop a comprehensive, binational and interdisciplinary program for teacher preparation and development.

Presently, Project Alianza is a collaboration of the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA), Mexican and American Solidarity Foundation, and five universities. The *Universidad Autonoma de México* is also participating.

The project concentrates on responding efficiently to serve an increasing Hispanic student population in the U.S. Southwest and Midwest. It focuses on kindergarten through sixth grade teachers – grade levels where bilingual education is mostly offered and where there is a shortage of well-prepared teachers. It also provides an entry point for catalyzing the broader national educational system to adjust systemically to changing student demographics.

In five years, Project Alianza will enable 200 teachers to teach and become leaders in educational issues in bilingual, binational, and bicultural settings (English-Spanish, United States-Mexico). This will be accomplished by expanding the elementary education curricula at five universities to include courses of study and practical experiences that will enhance the abilities of teachers, parents, administrators, school board members and community leaders to collaborate effectively.

The model program to be developed and piloted will enable universities to tap into three groups of individuals who possess the basic requirements of a prospective bilingual education teacher. These are:

- bilingual teacher aides,
- students in traditional bilingual teacher-preparation programs, and
- teachers trained in Mexico to teach in their elementary grades (*normalistas*) and who are legal U.S. residents.

These individuals will achieve certification for bilingual education. They will also develop leadership skills for serving the Hispanic student population. The program will enhance the capacity of Hispanic and non-Hispanic university students and educators to speak Spanish and work in cross-cultural environments – abilities essential to success in the 21st century.

Furthermore, by acting in a systemic and holistic way, all aspects of the educational system in the geographic areas served by the five universities, will be impacted. For example, collaborating universities from the United States and Mexico will develop new and innovative curricula. Participating school districts will create opportunities for novel teacher-preparation laboratories and practice. Supporting research and policy institutions will undertake relevant and timely research. Working together under the leadership of a research institution, information gained will be synthesized and disseminated as the program is carried out across the nation. Thus, other educational

Project Alianza – continued on page 2

Project Alianza - *continued from page 1*

systems facing similar circumstances will benefit from the project.

Program for "Normalistas"

The five collaborating universities selected to participate in Project Alianza offer studies that lead to bilingual education certification. Four of the universities (California State University at Long Beach, The University of Texas-Pan American, The University of Texas at San Antonio and Southwest Texas State University) have made a commitment to increase the number of bilingual education students by 5 percent each year. They will make accessible or establish an intensive English language class for *normalistas* and an intensive Spanish language enrichment program for other project participants.

Recruitment

The universities are in the process of recruiting and enrolling their first cohort of students. Each university will recruit *normalistas* and paraprofessionals working in bilingual settings as part of their first year's cohort. During the first year, each university will accept 10 *normalistas* into the program.

The four universities have used a variety of methods to recruit students. They have distributed information about the program through fliers and applications to school districts, colleges, universities and professional educational organizations and met with community groups and educational institutions (public schools, colleges and universities). They have released media advisories to their local newspapers and university newsletters.

The campaign to recruit *normalistas* and paraprofessionals to the project has been very successful. Initially, university personnel felt they might have difficulty recruiting students. They now find they have an overwhelming response of qualified candidates to the project.

The *normalistas* recruited into the project are individuals credentialed to teach in Mexico. They are residing legally in the United States but have been employed in areas other than teaching. They have been working in restaurants, as laborers and in various other jobs. Some have been able to use their skills as paraprofessionals in school districts. The four universities have recruited more than 100 *normalistas* and paraprofessionals.

Many of these are *normalistas superiors* or have *licenciaturas* in their countries, which are equivalent to a bachelor's degree. The credentialing offices and registrars of three of the participating universities recognize them as such. These students can enter the universities' post baccalaureate program.

One university representative described the *normalistas* as "extremely strong applicants" and noted that many hold degree specialties in math, science, special

Project Alianza - *continued on page 8*

Entities Participating in Project Alianza

Policy and Research Institutions

- Intercultural Development Research Association
- Mexican and American Solidarity Foundation (*Fundación Solidaridad México Americana*)
- Arizona State University

IDRA will provide the leadership for developing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the project. The *Universidad Autonoma de México* will participate in this effort as well.

For more information, contact Linda Cantu, M.A., at IDRA (210/684-8180; E-mail: idra@idra.org).

Public Schools

Participating schools will be those in districts that serve predominantly students of Mexican or Hispanic descent. Students may be recent immigrants or second-generation (or more) residents whose first language is Spanish.

Universities

The following participating universities offer studies leading to bilingual education certification:

- California State University at Long Beach
- University of Texas – Pan American
- University of Texas at San Antonio
- Southwest Texas State University

In This Issue...

3 Are We Making Educated Choices...?

5 From "DAC" to "EAC" – The Expanding Role

6 Failing Our Children – ... In-grade Retention

9 Upcoming Event: Early Childhood Education

10 Listening to Parents

13 Defending Neighborhood Schools

The Intercultural Development Research Association *(IDRA)* is a non-profit organization with a 501(c)(3) tax exempt status. The purpose of the organization is to disseminate information concerning equality of educational opportunity.

The *IDRA Newsletter* (ISSN 1069-5672, © 1999) serves as a vehicle for communication with educators, school board members, decision-makers, parents, and the general public concerning the educational needs of all children in Texas and across the United States.

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Are We Making Educated Choices About Educating Our Children?

Oanh H. Maroney, M.A.

Bilingual education continues to be subject to attacks by some individuals, educators and non-educators. Of course, as with most types of programming – particularly initiatives that receive financial support from taxpayer-funded budgets – the stakes are high, and everyone wants to have a say. Often times, some of these voices speak loudly, with misguided, misinformed principles and purposes.

One such voice is that of Silicon Valley millionaire businessman Ron Unz. In June 1998, California voters passed Unz's "English for the Children Initiative" by referendum vote. This initiative sought to outlaw bilingual instruction for limited-English-proficient (LEP) students and implement the use of sheltered English immersion for LEP and non-English speaking children up to age 10. After one year of intensive English instruction, LEP children would be placed into mainstream classes (Romero, 1998).

Others who are even somewhat familiar with the research on second language learning know that the sheltered English immersion approach – while it may work for a few students – is not the best way for the *majority* of students to learn English in our public schools.

Simply looking at the way Unz approached the basic premise of his initiative sheds light on how misinformed his efforts are:

> I just asked friends how long it took them to learn English." As a child, Unz heard the stories of how his Yiddish-speaking mother, the daughter of Russian immigrants was steeped in English before entering kindergarten. He concluded that if she could do it, then why not immigrant children today? Unz *disregards the extensive academic research* on the topic because "it's funded by pro- or anti-bilingual supporters [emphasis added] (O'Brien, 1998).

While much could be said about this particular initiative (now law) and what is wrong with it, Ron Unz is not the only ill-informed voice out there. Many people see fault with bilingual education. And, yes, there are some problems that exist with bilingual education as it has been implemented in some schools. However, the solution is not to implement radical approaches and practices for which there is research evidence proving their inability to be effective as a common practice for teaching all children.

This article looks at some of the evidence for only a few of the many approaches available for use in teaching English language learners. While it is not intended to present every available perspective on the approaches discussed, it is intended to highlight a small fraction of a vast body of evidence and, more importantly, to illustrate the fact that it is not acceptable to pick and choose or to simply disregard existing evidence when proposing to implement change. This is especially true concerning bilingual education because, in this case, change impacts millions of school children – for the rest of their lives.

Because each child is unique and different, each teacher must find the most effective way to help *every* child to learn.

Dr. José A. Cárdenas, IDRA founder and director emeritus, notes three important facts about *research* as a concept:

> - research is the scientific determination of that which common sense tells us;
> - research methodology is easy to manipulate, therefore one can readily prove or disprove any assumption; [and]
> - no research is many times better than poor research. It is much preferable to make educational decisions in the absence of information than to make them on the basis of erroneous information (1995).

The debate about bilingual education is decades old and still raging. One factor that continues to fuel the debate is related to Cárdenas' observation that research methodology is easily manipulable. Opponents and proponents alike have performed research studies and identified research findings that support their point of view. Because of this, it is important to discern which evidence is valid and credible and which is not.

The body of research that exists on second language learning (and countless other topics) serves as a collection of lessons learned about what works and what does not work. It is an active collection of formulas and anecdotes that often, at minimum, point us in the right direction in terms of finding the most plausible solution for the challenge at hand.

Our schools are laboratories in which research is conducted every day on millions of school-age children. The differences that students bring with them to school – including cultural and linguistic differences – and how schools approach those differences are critical factors in shaping the schooling experience.

> Language is inextricably linked to culture… The striping away of students' native language and culture is usually done for what teachers and schools believe are good reasons. Schools often make a direct link between students' English assimilation and their economic and social mobility. As a consequence, students who speak a language other than English are frequently viewed as "handicapped" and urged, through both subtle and direct means, to abandon their native language (Nieto, 1996).

Because each child is unique and different, each teacher must find the most effective way to help *every* child to learn. This is the challenge that teachers must meet for every subject they are required to teach, including helping LEP children to

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Are We Making Educated – *continued from page 3*

learn the English language.

Bilingual education opponents argue that research evidence on bilingual education is inconclusive, inconsistent and contradictory. However, this is not the case. Crawford notes:

> The most sophisticated evaluation study to date [by Ramirez, Yeun and Ramey, 1991] – a four-year, longitudinal study of 2,000 Spanish-speaking students in five states – found that "late-exit," developmental bilingual programs proved superior to "early-exit," transitional bilingual and English-only immersion programs… in programs that stressed native-language skills, students' growth in English reading and mathematics continued to increase long after it had leveled off among their peers and in the other programs" (1998).

For many, it is inconceivable to support an educational program that requires students to be given native language instruction support in school for several years. However, much of the research has documented that students generally need a minimum of five to seven years to develop the level of English proficiency needed to succeed academically in school:

> With most programs permitting students to remain a maximum of only three to four years, only partially positive results can be expected. The research evidence is in direct contrast to program implementation; nevertheless, many programs are successful (Nieto, 1996).

IDRA is concerned about ensuring that children who speak a language other than English benefit from quality instructional programs that capitalize on students' language and culture.

One of the major issues that affects bilingual education being recognized as an effective method for helping students acquire English is the somewhat loose definition and implementation of the program concept. There are many programs that are called "bilingual education" that aren't really bilingual education programs or that may not incorporate all of the principles of a good and effective bilingual education program model. This is an important consideration when analyzing a bilingual education program for its effectiveness. In most instances, to take any given bilingual education program and perform a simple comparison of its outcomes to another bilingual education program or to an immersion program would be like comparing apples and oranges.

Nieto notes that reviews of research in first and second language acquisition show that students' native language proficiency level directly influences the development of their second language proficiency (1996). IDRA is concerned about ensuring that children who speak a language other than English benefit from quality instructional programs that capitalize on students' language and culture. Based on research and appropriate pedagogy we know that the most effective way to teach English to children who speak another language is through an adequate bilingual education program (1996).

Cárdenas says that three characteristics of a good bilingual education program are that it:

- allows students' learning to continue to occur and cognitive stimulation, intellectual stimulation takes place without having to interrupt the cognitive development or the intellectual development while the kid sits in a classroom for any extended period of time while acquiring a new language system;
- facilitates students' acquisition of a new language system; and
- further extends students' original language system (1994).

Simply grouping limited-English-proficient students together in a classroom to learn English and allowing them to sometimes speak their native language does not constitute a bilingual education program.

According to IDRA, "a good bilingual education program… enhances the learning of English and subject matter. Bilingual education teaches English to children and gives them a chance to practice it while they also learn subjects like math and science" (1996).

Stephen Krashen notes that "the principles underlying successful bilingual education are the same principles that underlie successful language acquisition in general" (1993). These principles include the following:

- We acquire a second language by understanding messages, by obtaining *comprehensible* input.
- *Background knowledge* [i.e., the first language] can help make second language input more comprehensible, and can thus assist in the acquisition of the second language.
- The development of literacy occurs in the same way as second language acquisition does (Krashen, 1993).

Bilingual education involves more than simply translating words from one language to another or giving students a "sink or swim" course in the English language (Maroney, 1998).

> In its simplest form, bilingual education is the use of two languages. In a more sophisticated context, such as an educational response to the problems of limited-English-proficient students in American schools, bilingual education is the use of the native language for instructional purposes while English is being learned as a second language. Interrupting and delaying cognitive development and the acquisition of skills and knowledge until a new language is acquired is a waste of time and produces academic retardation and overagedness, which in turn produces underperformance and a propensity for dropping out of school (Cárdenas, 1994).

The end goal of bilingual education is to produce bilingual and biliterate students, who will in turn become productive citizens.

> In spite of the enormous impact that language has on children's schooling, lack of English skills *alone* cannot explain the poor academic achievement of students. It is tempting to fall back on this explanation and thus count on simple solutions like English "sink or swim" programs to solve the problem (Nieto, 1996).

In examining some of the research evidence used by opponents of bilingual edacation, researchers have cited poor methodology as an explanation for the resulting "proof" that bilingual education programs do not work. For instance, the 1996 study by Rossell and Baker is often cited by bilingual education critics as evidence against bilingual education programs. The authors of this study "concluded that there

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From "DAC" to "EAC" –

The Expanding Role of the Equity Assistance Center

Bradley Scott, M.A.

The IDRA Desegregation Assistance Center – South Central Collaborative for Equity has received inquiries as to why the name is changing to the IDRA South Central Collaborative for Equity. The explanation is simple. The role of the desegregation assistance centers (DACs) is expanding to embrace a broader set of issues than just school desegregation. Let me review a bit of history as a way of explaining what I mean.

The work of the desegregation assistance centers has broadened over the years of their existence. Historically, the centers were created and funded to assist local education agencies to address matters of desegregation by assisting them in preparing, adopting and implementing plans for the desegregation of public schools.

> Such technical assistance may, among other activities, include making available to such agencies information regarding effective methods of coping with special problems occasioned by desegregation and making available to such agencies personnel of the Office of Education or other persons specially equipped to advise and assist them in coping with such problems (Civil Rights Act, 1964).

Since the early 1960s when the Civil Rights Act was created, desegregation assistance centers have evolved from providing technical assistance in creating, adopting and implementing desegregation plans that address matters of access to school settings that are segregated by race (and eventually by national origin and sex). Historically, that meant that the DACs assisted local education agencies to eradicate Black and White schools in a given school system. Over time, the role expanded to focus on the *programs* and *curricula* within those schools. The premise here was simply that it made no sense to put racially different learners in a single school and continue to instruct them with a segregated curriculum or to deny certain students access to certain programs because of their race. Equal access to schools and programs within those schools became the expanded scope of the work of the DACs in their technical assistance.

Important legislative actions, such as the Educational Amendments of 1972, and court actions, such as the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Lau vs. Nichols*, solidified the understanding that the desegregation of public schools and access should be made available to all students regardless of their race, sex or national origin (language characteristics). In fact, so powerful was the impact of *Lau* and the educational amendments that it set into motion the idea that students must not only be afforded equal access to schools and school programs, but also be *treated equally as well.*

The early 1970s reshaped the work of the DACs to include technical assistance focused on *equal access* and *equal treatment* of students.

The work of the DACs further expanded in the early 1980s to notions of equity. In addition to understanding that equal educational opportunity must be a reality for schools to give students nondiscriminatory access to schools and programs, the concept of educational equity acknowledged that the differentiated characteristics of students must be taken into account in terms of how students access curriculum, programs, supports and other opportunities in educational settings. The shift in technical assistance expanded beyond desegregation to the more complex concept of integration, which embraced not just *breadth of access* or coverage but also *depth of inclusion* into schools, programs and opportunities. This involved addressing issues of how different kinds of learners were involved in all kinds of curricular offerings at all levels (i.e., from regular English to advanced placement English, or regular curricular offerings to inclusion in gifted and talented programs) and, if in their being involved, were their linguistic, cultural and social characteristics taken into account in terms of how instruction and involvement occurred.

What then is the next step of desegregation technical assistance? It is to assist educators and communities to focus seriously on access, treatment and *outcomes*. The operative issue here is comparability of outcomes. The questions we faced were:

- Do different learners in desegregated settings have equal opportunity to access schools and all of their programs regard less of their race, sex, or national origin?
- Do all students have an equitable opportunity to learn where their racial, gender, linguistic, and social and cultural differences are factored into how they are presented with opportunities to learn and are they treated in ways that account for those differences?
- As a result of their inclusion in all aspects of the school's programs and offerings and of equitable treatment therein, are comparable academic and other outcomes achieved?

The desegregation assistance centers are now being called *equity assistance centers* which suggests an evolving role that is important and appropriate in light of the school reform efforts that have captured the attention of the nation in the 1990s. The educational goals were embraced by the Improving America's Schools Act that reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The goals have set a national tone calling for comparable outcomes between and among diverse learners and that all learners must be challenged and assisted to achieve high standards of academic excellence regardless of their race, sex, national origin, linguistic differences, cultural and social characteristics, economic circumstances, and disability. This must happen in all communities, in all kinds of traditional and non-traditional schools (including magnet and charter schools), in desegregated settings under federal court or other external mandate to desegregate, and in districts that no longer are under such man-

From "DAC" to "EAC" – continued on page 8

Failing Our Children –
Finding Alternatives to In-Grade Retention

During a 30-year period, the educational pendulum has alternated between advocating social promotion and supporting in-grade retention. *Social promotion* refers to the practice of passing students who have failed to master part or all of the grade-level curriculum on to the next grade with their cohort of age-grade peers. *In-grade retention*, on the other hand, requires students to repeat the same grade a second time in order to master problem material.

The pendulum has changed directions by decade. For example, in the 1970s, social promotion was favored, but with the call for raising educational standards in the 1980s and its attendant minimal competence testing, the favor returned to retention. By 1990, however, two of the largest school districts in the country, Chicago and New York City, were advocating promoting students with their age-appropriate cohort.

As we approach the year 2000, the pendulum clearly indicates in-grade retention as the favored response to ameliorating poor academic achievement. This policy brief by the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) presents an in-depth look at the issue of in-grade retention in Texas, reviews research that finds this practice to be ineffective and outlines alternatives to both retention and social promotion.

Recommendations

Based on the research presented in this policy brief, IDRA recommends the following.

- Enhance the professional development of teachers to ensure they have the knowledge and skills to teach a wider range of students to meet standards.
- Redesign school structures to support more intensive learning, i.e., multi-age classes where teachers stay with students for more than one year.
- Identify as early as possible students who are not achieving at satisfactory levels.
- Publish retention rates along with TAAS scores at the campus and district level as well as the cost per pupil to repeat a grade.
- Ensure that the criteria used to determine "exemplary" and "recognized" school status include low rates of in-grade retention.
- Re-establish limits on the number of times a student can be retained in grade.
- Use classroom assessment that better informs teaching, i.e., performance based assessments (rubrics, checklists, anecdotal records) that guide instruction.

Findings at a Glance

The National Scene

- In-grade retention (the practice of requiring students to repeat the same grade a second time to master material) has been a recurrent theme in education during the last 30 years. Policy-makers favor it one decade only to oppose it the next.
- Currently in-grade retention is the favored response to ameliorating poor academic performance and is linked to a call for higher educational standards by politicians.
- Retention is often seen as the only alternative to *social promotion* (the practice of passing students who have not mastered grade level content to the next grade with their age appropriate cohort).
- The research on retention is unequivocal – the effects of retention are harmful. Retention does not benefit students academically or socially. Out of the 66 studies done on retention during 1990 to 1997, 65 found it to be ineffective and/or harmful to students.
- Fifty percent of students who repeat a grade do no better the second time, and 25 percent actually do worse.
- The threat of retention is not a motivating force for students to work harder.
- Retention is strongly associated with dropping out of school in later years. A second retention makes dropping out a virtual certainty.
- Retained students suffer lower self-esteem and view retention as a punishment and a stigma, not a positive event designed to help them.
- African American students and Hispanic students are retained at twice the rate of White students.
- Forty percent of repeaters come from the lowest socio-economic quartile as compared to only 8.5 percent from the highest quartile.
- Retention is expensive. It costs the country an average of $10 billion annually to have students repeat a grade a second time.

The Texas Scene

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) is required by the Texas Education Code to produce an annual grade level retention report. This report has been produced for the 1993-94 through 1996-97 (the most recent year for which data are available) school years and presents annual retention rates by grade and ethnicity. The following highlights are based largely on these TEA reports.

Failing Our Children – continued on page 7

Cost of Retentions In-Grade in Texas

School Year	Total Retentions	Operating Expenditures Per Pupil	Estimated State and Local Costs
1993-94	125,959	$4,294	$540,867,946
1994-95	128,360	$4,360	$559,688,840
1995-96	144,683	$4,756	$688,112,348
1996-97	147,202	$4,717	$694,351,834

Source: 1996-97 Report on Grade Level Retention of Texas Students (Austin, Texas: Texas Education Agency, 1998).

IDRA Policy Briefs to be Released Soon

The Intercultural Development Research Association has developed a series of policy briefs on four key issues in education. The series is being released in February and March of 1999 to inform community and policy decisions during the Texas legislative session.

The series and associated data are available on-line at www.idra.org (free) or by contacting IDRA for copies ($7 each). Excerpts of the findings and recommendations are being printed in the January, February and March 1999 issues of the *IDRA Newsletter*.

Titles Include:

- ✓ ***Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs in Texas – What is Known; What is Needed***
- ✓ ***Missing: Texas Youth – Dropout and Attrition in Texas Public High Schools***
- ✓ ***Failing Our Children – Finding Alternatives to In-grade Retention***
- ✓ ***Students for Sale – The Use of Public Money for Private Schooling***

For more information, contact the IDRA Institute for Policy and Leadership, Dr. Albert Cortez, director, at 5835 Callaghan Road, Suite 350 • San Antonio, Texas 78228-1190 • phone 210/684-8180 • fax 210/684-5389

Failing Our Children *– continued from page 6*

- ◆ In the 1996-97 school year, it is estimated a total of $694,351,834 was spent on school retention.
- ◆ The total number of retained students in Texas has increased steadily from 125,959 in 1993-94 to 147,202 in 1996-97.
- ◆ Consistently, significantly more males are retained than females. Male students made up over 60 percent of all retained students during 1993 to 1997.
- ◆ Retention rates for Hispanic students (25.5 percent) and African American students (23.9 percent) are over two and a half times higher than the rate of White students (9.4 percent).
- ◆ Economically disadvantaged students (5 percent) are more likely to be retained than are non-economically disadvantaged students (3.5 percent).
- ◆ Special education students (6.1 percent) are retained at about twice as often as are non-special education students (3.8 percent).
- ◆ Contrary to the national pattern that shows the highest number of students are retained in first grade, retention in Texas occurs most frequently in ninth grade. One out of six ninth grade students repeats that grade every year. This rate is twice as large as any other grade and continues to rise. The 1993-94 ninth grade retention rate of 16.5 percent rose to 17.8 percent in the 1996-97 school year.
- ◆ When the district and campus characteristics are analyzed, the highest retention rates are found in districts located in urban areas and in districts with large percentages of minorities and low socio-economic status students.

Number of Retentions In-Grade in Texas

School Year	Total Retentions	White	African American	Hispanic American	Other	Number Minority
1993-94	125,959	38,375	24,363	61,385	1,836	87,584
1994-95	128,369	38,593	24,452	63,490	1,834	89,776
1995-96	144,683	43,302	27,871	71,453	2,057	101,381
1996-97	147,202	43,308	27,632	74,103	2,159	103,894

Source: 1996-97 Report on Grade Level Retention of Texas Students (Austin, Texas: Texas Education Agency, 1998).

Percentage of Retentions In-Grade in Texas by Race and Ethnicity

School Year	White	African American	Hispanic American	Other	Percent Minority
1993-94	30.4%	19.3%	48.7%	1.5%	69.5%
1994-95	30.1%	19.0%	49.5%	1.4%	69.9%
1995-96	29.9%	19.3%	49.4%	1.4%	70.1%
1996-97	29.4%	18.8%	50.3%	1.5%	70.6%

Source: 1996-97 Report on Grade Level Retention of Texas Students (Austin, Texas: Texas Education Agency, 1998).

For a copy of "Failing Our Children – Finding Alternatives to In-Grade Retention" ($7), contact the IDRA Institute for Policy and Leadership, Dr. Albert Cortez, director, at 210/684-8180 or view the policy brief and related tables on-line at www.idra.org (free).

Project Alianza - *continued from page 2*

education, speech pathology and foreign languages. The credentialing of *normalistas* and *licenciados* with bachelor equivalents is an additional benefit to the students and to the overall goals of the program.

Needs and Expectations

The recruitment of *normalistas* who have participated in schools and universities in Mexico for teacher preparation and who have teaching experience has been very successful. For *normalistas* entering the Project Alianza teacher preparation program, the universities have developed an intensive English program that will help the *normalista* students to improve their English skills and prepare for exit exams.

Conversely, bilingual teacher aides and students in traditional bilingual teacher preparation programs selected for the project will receive intensive Spanish preparation classes. The language instruction in English or Spanish will be designed specifically for these students. The design for the intensive language programs will include mini-seminars, intensive language classes, modules in the content areas of teaching in both English and Spanish, and cultural awareness classes.

As a result of this approach of identifying students and placing them in intensive language programs, Project Alianza will develop a group of highly motivated, highly qualified bilingual teachers knowledgeable in the language and the culture of the children they are working with and the subject content they are teaching.

Research

Research and policy institutions such as IDRA, Mexican and American Solidarity Foundation, and Arizona State University will conduct research that can be disseminated to other institutions across the United States. Several research projects are being undertaken as part of this initiative. Specifically, Arizona State University will research three topics:

- A study of Spanish language competencies needed by teachers in Spanish-English programs of bilingual education.
- A description of the preparation program in the Mexican *normalista* training school system since the reform of the *escuelas normales* in recent years, and how the program compares to a cross-section of state requirements for bilingual education teachers in the United States.
- A review of the literature and certification requirements to ascertain what bilingual education teachers should know and be able to do (the skills and competencies deemed necessary to be an effective bilingual education teacher).

The Mexican and American Solidarity Foundation in collaboration with Arizona State University will research the different periods of evolution of the *escuelas normales*.

As Project Alianza progresses, California State University at Long Beach, The University of Texas-Pan American, The University of Texas at San Antonio and Southwest Texas State University will also research topics dealing with the integration of *normalistas* into the bilingual education program, as well as focusing on the development of new and innovative curricula.

For more information contact the project administrators at IDRA: Dr. Abelardo Villarreal and Linda Cantu or visit the IDRA web site (www.idra.org).

Linda Cantu, M.A., is an education associate in the IDRA Division of Professional Development. Comments and questions may be directed to her via e-mail at idra@idra.org.

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation was established in 1930 to "help people help themselves through the practical application of knowledge and resources to improve their quality of life and that of future generations." Its programming activities focus on the common visions of a world in which each person has a sense of worth; accepts responsibility for self, family, community, and societal well being; and has the capacity to be productive, and to help create nurturing families, responsive institutions, and healthy communities. Grants are concentrated in the United States, Latin America and the Caribbean, and southern Africa.

From "DAC" to "EAC" - *continued from page 5*

dates but are voluntarily desegregating, as well as those districts for which desegregation is not an issue at all.

The equity assistance centers (EACs) are now in a position to assist all kinds of public schools wherever they are in communities and however these public schools may be configured to create excellent opportunities for all learners to achieve high standards of academic excellence regardless of their race, sex or national origin. The EACs will collaborate with other technical assistance providers, including comprehensive centers, state education agencies and other federal and state entities, in meeting this challenge. This should help to avoid duplication of services and increase the potential impact of technical assistance to public schools as they continue to transform to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

The EACs' unique role in transforming public education will be the technical assistance they provide to achieve the Goals of Educational Equity that involve:

- equal and non-discriminatory access to schools and their programs;
- equitable treatment within those schools and programs offered in those schools;
- equitable opportunities to learn in those schools and programs, including the comparability of resources (fiscal, physical, personnel, personnel experience, time, intensity, coverage and depth); and
- comparability of high achievement outcomes for all learners regardless of race, sex, national origin or other characteristics of diversity.

The EACs' mission is to help everyone in schools and communities see that recreating schools to work for all learners to achieve high standards means not only embracing equity and excellence, but also embracing *equity-based excellence*. Thus instructional models and programs must be flexible and adaptive enough to accommodate all kinds of learners, in all kinds of learner settings, and produce comparably high outcomes. The invitational priorities that the Secretary of Education has stated as a special interest also help clarify this issue.

The EACs' special charge, then, is to help others to see and implement – in the transforming context of public education – what we have been saying since the early 1970s. The continuum that was talked about before now has been extended not only to talk about comparable outcomes, but comparably high outcomes, for all learners, no matter where they are in public schools, no matter how those public schools are configured or how they operate. Public schools can do what they choose to educate their students within certain limits and parameters, but they are accountable for educating *all* learners to high academic standards and outcomes regardless of differing characteristics of those learners.

Bradley Scott, M.A., is a senior education associate in the IDRA Division of Professional Development. He directs the IDRA South Central Collaborative for Equity. Comments and questions may be directed to him via e-mail at idra@idra.org.

A Jump on Tomorrow

Sixth Annual IDRA

La Semana del Niño

The Week of the Young Child

Early Childhood Educator's Institute™

Meet nationally-known facilitators!
Interact with other early childhood educators!
Visit schools showcasing innovative programs!
Take home lots of ideas for your classroom!
Enjoy San Antonio during Fiesta!
Meet author Terri Ybañez!

April 20 through April 22, 1999
San Antonio Airport Hilton
Presented by: Intercultural Development Research Association

Monday

Pre-institute seminar on dual language programs.

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Tuesday

Morning session led by Dr. María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel, IDRA executive director. Dr. Josefina Tinajero will be the keynote speaker. A series of concurrent sessions will be held in the morning and again in the afternoon. At another location, hundreds of early childhood educators from across the state will focus on working with families in a distance learning session via video conference. Book signing and wine and cheese reception in the evening with author Terri Ybañez.

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Wednesday

School visits in the morning. Dr. Antonio Gonzalez will present a session on brain research and literacy. The "Technology Fest" concurrent sessions will be held in the afternoon.

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Thursday

School visits in the morning followed by special sessions on reading fun and early literacy. The conference will close with a luncheon featuring keynote speaker Rebeca María Barrera, president of the National Latino Children's Institute.

School Visits

Take this opportunity to visit model early childhood centers. Institute participants will travel to high-performing, high-minority sites in the San Antonio area that are effectively working with diverse learners. These include Head Start classrooms, dual language bilingual programs, a developmentally appropriate multi-age program, a Title I schoolwide program, a dual language magnet program and a national Blue Ribbon school.

Concurrent Sessions

Concurrent sessions will be held throughout the institute to provide participants with the latest on language and literacy development. The sessions will be led by practitioners who have tested strategies in the classroom. The sessions will also feature a "Technology Fest" that demonstrates ways of integrating technology into early childhood instruction.

Registration

Institute and Pre-institute: $150 each
Fee includes reception, institute and pre-institute sessions, school visits, and Thursday luncheon
Institute: $150 each
Fee includes reception, institute sessions, school visits, and Monday and Thursday luncheons
Pre-institute only: $75 each
Reception only: $20 each
To register, contact IDRA for a registration form.

Pre-institute on Dual Language Programs

Monday, April 19, 1999

This pre-institute on literacy is designed to provide early childhood educators with a whole day of training and preparation focused on early childhood dual language programs. Featured speakers include: Irma Trujillo, Dr. Mari Riojas, and Dr. Adela Solís.

Hotel Information

The institute will be held at the San Antonio Airport Hilton. The deadline to receive the special room rate of $95 (single or double) plus state and local taxes is April 4. Reservations must be made by the participant. Call 1-800-HILTONS.

For more information or a registration brochure contact Hilaria Bauer or Carol Chavez at IDRA, 210/684-8180; e-mail: idra@idra.org.

Sponsored by the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA). Supporting IDRA projects include the South Central Collaborative for Equity (formerly called the Desegregation Assistance Center) and the STAR Center (the comprehensive regional assistance center that serves Texas via a collaboration of IDRA, the Dana Center at UT Austin and RMC Research Corporation).

Listening to Parents

Anna Alicia Romero

The 1998-99 school year has been one of changes in San Antonio for the Edgewood Independent School District (ISD). Last year, the Children's Educational Opportunity Foundation (CEO Foundation) held a press conference announcing that they would contribute $50 million to low-income families living within the boundaries of the Edgewood ISD to attend private schools.

Below are responses from parents on the subject of publicly funded private school vouchers and their effects on the education of all children and their community. Responses were obtained through focus group interviews and one-on-one interviews. In the participants' answers there are references to the North side of the city, which is usually held as the part of town with greater resources. Alamo Heights is a section of Bexar county that is affluent and whose public schools are well equipped. This is in contrast to the Edgewood district, which is predominately Hispanic with a high percentage of economically disadvantaged students and has historically been a district with low property tax wealth. Edgewood ISD is also well-known in Texas for being the lead plaintiff in a historic lawsuit against the state for inherent inequities in the former method public schools were funded.

The people interviewed are:

- **A.B.:** Alice Barbosa, a retired grandmother residing in San Antonio ISD;
- **C.G.:** Grace Garza, a grandmother and an employee of Edgewood ISD;
- **M.O.:** Martha G. Ortiz, a vocal and active parent in Harlandale ISD;
- **C.P.:** Clementina Padilla, a grandmother in Edgewood ISD;
- **C.R.:** Celia Rodriguez, a concerned and active San Antonio residing within San Antonio ISD;
- **D.R.:** Dolores Rodriguez, a parent in Harlandale ISD;
- **H.R.:** Helen Rodriguez, also a concerned and active citizen residing within San Antonio ISD; and
- **S.R.:** Sylvia Rodriguez, an active parent in Edgewood ISD.

Why are our neighborhood public schools important?

H.R.: If they're in the neighborhood, they can be closer to their homes. The parents will probably be able to attend to the school and be closer to their children.

G.G.: The neighborhood public schools are very important because when a family moves in and they think, "where is my house going to be?" it's going to be near a public school, or a school period.

C.P: *Porque son accesibles al medio socio-económico en esta área – no todo el mundo tiene un carro. Es muy importante que los niños de esta área acudan a las escuelas de su comunidad, lo más cercano posible es mejor para la madre y el padre. Veo que (las escuelas) tienen buenos programas. Pero lamentable, no todos los padres tienen la información.*

[Because they are accessible to the socio-economic level in this area. Not everyone has a car. It is very important that the children go to the schools in their community. The closer the better for the mother and father. I see that they (the schools) have good programs. Sadly, not all parents have that information.]

D.R.: Because we have the right to speak up on education and speak up about what kind of education our kids are getting. They [the schools] ask for our opinion, and we can give it. We have a right to speak as a parent. We can get involved, and that's part of the learning process for our kids.

M.O.: We can pressure our administrators, our teachers to do a better job versus the private system. They don't want to hear you, they feel they have a pretty good thing going on. In the public schools they know we are watching, and they have to respond. Also, the public schools offer more as far as sports and the fine arts. Children should be kept in good physical condition. In private schools it's not mandatory.

S.R.: Well, for the education of our kids and building up the community as a whole there. I've got a child in the elementary, the middle school and the high school, and they're all fairly close. To me that's important in their educational lives. Some people may not be able to afford to [travel] further out than some others. Basically, you see a lot of your neighbors there too. You have a lot more camaraderie going on with the parents.

How do you feel our neighborhood public schools could be improved?

C.R.: They can improve by having better teachers, better superintendents and, at the same time, teach the children that they're supposed to behave and understand and study. That's why there's so many dropouts. The teachers are there to help them, but sometimes they just don't… If the parents will see that they're doing everything for the children and at the same time *they* can themselves cooperate in a lot of things around the school to help the children.

A.B.: *Pues yo diría que tener más disciplina entre los chamacos y… que las maestras estén, como le diré, que estén al tanto de que los chamacos estén estudiando bien y todo pero se necesitan… yo pienso que se necesitan más maestras para que no tengan tantos niños en una clase sola. Porque entre menos chamacos tengan, más tiempo puede dedicar la maestra a los niños. Porque yo he sabido que ha habido escuelas que tienen muchos niños en una clase y no pueden dedicar mucho tiempo en uno. Ponle que quince o veinte. Si tienen más de treinta pues es muy difícil que la maestra se dedique mucho tiempo a los niños. Y pues, yo digo que si se dedican más tiempo con los chamacos, pueda ser que salgan más educados los niños y ponen más atención.*

[Well, I would say that having more discipline among the kids, that the teachers be aware that kids are studying well. I think they need more teachers so there won't be so many children in one classroom. Because the less children they have, the more time a teacher can dedicate to the children. If they spend more time with the kids, it could be that the children get better educated and that they pay more attention.]

C.R.: *Y que hayan maestras bilingües. Eso es muy importante. Muy importante para los niños. Porque deben aprender*

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ingles pero al mismo tiempo también deben aprender español.

[And that there be bilingual teachers. That is very important, very important for the children. Because they should learn English but at the same time learn Spanish.]

C.P.: *Me gustaría que se mejoraran las escuelas en mi distrito porque eso es parte del autoestima de los niños y las maestras también. Que vayan a una escuela bonita donde eleven su autoestima escolar. Que no hayan ventanas rotas, las paredes mal pintadas. ¿No le van a dar ganas de volver! Yo peleo mucho por el autoestima de los niños cuando entran a la escuela o cuando salen de la casa.*

[I would like to see that the schools in my district improve because that is part of the children's self-esteem and the teachers' too; that they go to a pretty school where they raise their academic self-esteem; that there not be broken windows and poorly painted walls. They're not going to want to come back! I fight a lot for children's self-esteem from the time they walk into a school or leave their house.]

M.O.: Make the teachers accountable. I know they say we have good teachers and so forth, especially when teachers come from the North [North side of San Antonio]. I have seen teachers who come from the North or from the outside, they are indifferent to our education and our children. I feel our students are not challenged enough. There are some [teachers] who just come to pick up a paycheck. I have made enemies for saying this, but I have to say what I feel and see.

S.R.: I would like to see a more open-door policy from the administration for the volunteers… school-wise, a wider selection of electives in the school. But I guess as a whole, they're all right.

There is a topic that I like to discuss, that's special ed. It needs to be improved.

I would like to see less police called in for minor infractions when they can be solved by following procedures. I would like to see less of a dropout rate. There's got to be other ways to work out things with the kids and call the parents to come in. They can find other ways… working with the parents. Why are they going through all those problems? I feel they should check them [the students] out right away. Are they dyslexic? Are they special ed.? Do they fall into those categories? And if they do, take care of that problem. And if they don't and there isn't a problem, then go to other procedures.

What do "vouchers" mean to you and how do you feel about public money going to private schools?

C.R.: Well, I think that the public money should stay in public schools. If a child is going to transfer to a private school, he's going to have to take the bus and a lot of things… I don't think so…

A.B.: Yeah, but they're offering the money, Celia…

Here in the United States all children should have the right to a good quality education, not just the elite. Everyone should get it. No child should be denied.

C.R.: I don't think it's right. I don't think it's right. I think public money should stay in public schools.

A.B.: Well, I've heard quite a bit about that, but I'm not in favor of it either, but I kind of feel that if it's going to be an advantage to the student to better himself, that's fine. But then it's going to create problems for the rest of the schools plus to the parents. If they can't afford to have the child go to a better school – or I wouldn't say better because to me all the schools are the same if they have good teachers – they can advance just as well there or in any other schools and that money should be used at the school, the public school.

H.R.: *Que tengan más interés también… que estén seguros que las criaturas que les den el* voucher *que sí tengan el interés en usarlo. Y así también los padres que les ayuden a tener más interés en esa oportunidad. Eso es lo que creo yo.*

[That they also have more interest in it… that they be sure that the children to whom they are giving the voucher are interested in using it. And that way parents can help them have a greater interest in that opportunity. That's what I think.]

G.G.: I want to know where these men, these CEOs, get off in coming in [here]. But I did some research. When I first saw Walton's name on the list of the directors, I said to h— with this man. I'm not going to go to Wal-Mart any more.

We had a board meeting at [our elementary school]. I had never seen so many media come out of the woodwork for a board meeting. But I'm going to quote what one of my volunteers said. Her daughter is in a gifted and talented program. That parent is very involved in the community; I'm saying church, school and home, in everything. She has three children. Her comment was, "I was asked, 'why didn't you apply to get one of those vouchers?' Why should I want to go anywhere else when my child is already receiving a very good education?"

C.P.: *Como no tengo toda la información, parece ser algo maravilloso. Pero como estoy oyendo un poco más, no se oye que son para el beneficio de las escuelas ni las familias y ha de haber otros padres como yo que no tienen toda la información, ni qué son, ni de dónde vienen, ni cómo se usan. Sería muy importante saber cuál es la finalidad de esos* vouchers, *saber a dónde vamos.*

[Since I don't have all of the information, it appears to be something wonderful. But as I am hearing more, it doesn't sound to me to be for the benefit of either the schools or the families. There are probably other parents like me who don't have the full information, nor what they (the vouchers) are, or where they came from, or how they are used. It would be very important to know what is the end result of those vouchers, to know where we are going.]

M.O.: To begin with, there should be a separation of public institutions and the private. They are also taking money away from our children. If you want to send your child to private school, that is your right, but to me it's an injustice to take money that is needed more in the public schools. To me this was not an angel helping Edgewood. They're just trying to destroy the public education system, and they are masking it by saying they are helping the poor… we are supposed to help *all* children.

Here in the United States all children should have the right to a good quality education, not just the elite. Everyone should get it. No child should be denied.

Many jobs could be lost. People would be displaced. The neighborhood would go down.

How would public money going to private schools affect your schools?

C.R.: Less money.

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A.B.: And why can't that money be used just as well, as it is with a private school, be used in a public school?

Who would benefit the most from vouchers?

C.P.: *Sería un derrumbe. Porque no todo el mundo puede mandar a sus niños a las escuelas privadas. De hecho yo no pude. Para mi eso sería desastroso. ¿Qué le pasaría a esta comunidad? ¿Van a aceptar a todos mis niños? ¿A todos los niños Latinos con mis impuestos?*

[It would mean a collapse, because not everyone in the world can send their children to private school. As a matter of fact, I can't. For me, it would be disastrous. What would happen to this community? Are they going to accept all my children? All Latino children with my taxes?]

There should be equal opportunities for all the kids regardless of where you live. I would like to see the money go into the public schools instead of to certain individuals. There should be equal opportunities for all the kids regardless of where you live.

M.O.: I'm very much against it. I don't care if it's a poor school district or one like Alamo Heights. Public funding should be shared by all public schools. If you want your child in a private school, you should pay for it out of your own pocket. The only thing it'll do is weaken the public system and make it go down. I'm talking about maintenance, I'm talking about teachers, I'm talking about everything.

Private schools *exigen a los padres que vendan esto, que vendan lo otro* [require parents to sell this and sell that]. It's not going to stop.

It would mean the deterioration of the buildings. As it is, it's tough deciding this because of the hard heads on the *mesa directiva* [school board]. This means a lot less money for books, a lot less money for everything. Every student should have a book, there's no excuse for this. It just makes my blood boil. How dare them. I'll do whatever it takes to help Edgewood, to speak against vouchers. I'll do whatever it takes.

S.R.: Oh, it's going to affect it greatly because more kids are going to go to the private school so our school district is going to have less monies. Then after a while they're going to have less teachers, less money to spend on the kids as a whole that we have there, and we're going to lose more of our kids… the families that can't afford schooling for a better education. This is their one chance, that's how they see it. And if you have too many of those people doing that, the school district is going to go way down, way down.

C.R.: I guess the private school [would benefit the most]! Not the children, or am I wrong?

C.P.: *Ese es otro punto donde yo tengo poca información. Yo sé que cada año yo pago impuestos. Como yo oigo mis hijos decir que la comida es muy feíta y yo supongo que mis impuestos van para darles de comer a los niños y a las composturas de la escuela… no se aquí como funciona la secretaría de la educación. Pero para eso trabajamos los padres para mejorar los edificios y proveerle a los niños lo que les falta.*

[That is another point where I have little information. I know that every year I pay taxes. I hear my children say that the food is a little ugly, and I suppose that my taxes go to feed the children and for repairs to the school. I don't know how the department of education operates here. But that is why we parents work, to improve the (school) buildings and to provide children with what they need.]

Suena muy bonito y detrás de algo muy bonito hay algo muy malo. ¿Quién dio ese dinero?

[It sounds nice and behind something very nice, there is something very bad. Who gave that money?]

D.R.: Well, I really don't know. I think it's more needed in the public schools. I don't think you should use it for private schools. We need it more in the public schools. Maybe if there's extra money for teachers we can use it for extra teachers instead of sending it to the private schools… you know, for more books, materials.

M.O.: Everybody loses. Nobody will benefit from it, going all the way from neighborhoods, everybody loses. Are we doing justice to the ones being chosen and the ones left behind? I don't think so.

S.R.: Just a small amount of our children and families compared to everybody as a whole. It would be a very small fraction. I would like to see it where it's evenly distributed [the privately funded vouchers] whether it's private or public. It should be straight across the board. The public schools get a certain amount of money too. You shouldn't have to go just to a private school to get your so-called better education. I would like to see the money go into the public schools instead of to certain individuals. There should be equal opportunities for all kids regardless of where you live.

How will children with special needs be affected by vouchers?

C.P.: *No lo sé. No se si están aceptando niños con necesidades especiales o se hacen excepciones.*

[I don't know. I don't know if they are accepting children with special needs or if they are making exceptions.]

D.R.: That money could be used over here for the public schools for computers, materials or extra help that they need in the rooms… for teachers to be better trained to work with special needs children.

S.R.: This is one of the reasons I haven't taken advantage of the voucher. I realize Edgewood still has a ways to go, but, let me tell you, they're ahead of the game compared to some of the people in the North side.

If you had a choice to use this money to improve your neighborhood public schools or send your child to private school, what would you do?

G.G.: Improve my neighborhood schools.

S.R.: I would take the public schools because if it's the private then it's just your individual children, but if it's the public schools, that affects all kids. You do get a portion of it as well as everyone else and everybody goes up together.

C.P.: *Yo mejoraría la educación al nivel escolar de las escuelas en mi comunidad. Siempre habrán niños en estas escuelas y los edificios. Ese dinero lo quieren para ayudar a unos cuantos y no a todo los niños, no a toda la comunidad.*

[I would improve education at the school level in my community. There will always be children in these schools and buildings. They want that money to help just a few and not all children, not the whole community.]

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Through the national Mobilization for Equity project (funded by the Ford Foundation through the National Coalition of Advocates for Students), IDRA has led an ongoing effort to develop a network of parents in Texas who work together to achieve the best possible education for all students. Participants in this network, Families United For Education: Getting Organized [Familias unidas para la educación: ganando organizadas] (FUEGO), represent various school districts, distinct geographic areas and the spectrum of socio-economic and educational backgrounds. They have come together to share information and their experiences in order to promote greater awareness of education issues. Below are principles they have outlined related to the issue of public money used for private schooling.

Defending Our Neighborhood Public Schools Against Vouchers

What are vouchers? "Vouchers refer either to tax rebates for parents or student scholarships funded with public tax dollars to help pay the cost of tuition at private or parochial schools."[1]

- Vouchers take money away from our neighborhood schools and the community.
- With vouchers, neighborhood public schools will have less money and increased taxes for property owners and businesses.
- Our neighborhood public schools must serve all children. Private schools don't serve all children and can deny admission to any child. They will exclude those they can't teach or don't want for any reason.
- Key supporters of vouchers have been against programs and funding to help all children.
- Competition between private and public schools will not improve public neighborhood schools.
- Neighborhood public schools have to answer to the public. Private schools do not.
- Neighborhood public schools are an ideal place for parents to become involved and ensure quality instruction.
- Private schools in Texas have neither the capacity nor the capability to absorb large numbers of poor students.
- Private schools are not held to the same rigid requirements for public schools. Many don't meet minimum state requirements.
- The cost of the voucher will not cover the tuition at most elite schools in Texas.
- Vouchers will rarely pay for transportation, uniforms, books and other fees.
- Publicly funded vouchers would create a dual system of separate and unequal schools: one for the rich and one for the poor.
- The best way to strengthen public schools is to *strengthen* public schools.

Hay que defender nuestras vecindades y escuelas contra los vales

¿Qué son vales (vouchers)? "Los vales se refieren o a rebajas en el impuesto de los padres o a becas al estudiante financiadas con fondos públicos para ayudar a pagar el costo de la inscripción en escuelas privadas o parroquiales."[1]

- *Los vales le quitarán dinero a las escuelas en nuestras vecindades y a nuestra comunidad.*
- *Los vales harán que nuestras escuelas públicas pierdan recursos. Esto resultará en aumento de impuestos para los propietarios.*
- *Nuestras escuelas públicas tienen que servir a todo niño. Las escuelas privadas no sirven a todo niño y le pueden negar entrada a cualquier niño. Pueden excluir a los que no pueden enseñar o no quieren por cualquier razón.*
- *Las personas claves que están apoyando los vales han opuesto programas y recursos para ayudar a* todos *los niños.*
- *Competencia entre escuelas públicas y privadas no mejorará las escuelas en nuestras vecindades.*
- *Las escuelas públicas tienen que responder al público. Las escuelas privadas no.*
- *Las escuelas públicas en su vecindad son sitios ideales para participar en la educación de sus hijos.*
- *Las escuelas privadas no se tienen el lugar ni la capacidad para grandes números de niños pobres.*
- *Escuelas privadas no tienen que mantener los requisitos de las escuelas públicas. Muchas no alcanzan las normas mínimas del estado.*
- *El valor del vale no cubre el costo de inscripción en las escuelas más prestigiosas. Los vales raras veces pagarán por la transportación, uniformes, libros y otros gastos.*
- *Los vales crearán un sistema dual de escuelas privadas para los que tienen recursos y escuelas públicas para los pobres.*
- *La mejor manera de mejorar las escuelas públicas es* mejorar *las escuelas públicas.*

Lain, J. *Exploding the Myths About Vouchers* (Texas Association of School Boards: *Texas Lone Star*, March 1998).

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Valuing students while providing them with proper and adequate resources in the learning environment will foster success better than any quick-fix remedy can.

was no evidence that bilingual programs were superior to English-only options for limited-English-proficient children" (Krashen, 1998).

Critiques by Cummins and Krashen show that the Rossell and Baker study is flawed in many ways, including the fact that the researchers strongly rely on studies of French immersion in Canada as evidence (Crawford, 1998).

There are several approaches that fall under the general umbrella of *immersion* programs. There is *Canadian-style immersion* (CSI), which is frequently offered as an alternative approach to bilingual education for limited-English-proficient students in our schools. CSI has been used quite successfully in Canada with middle-class students who receive much of their content area subject matter in the second language, with efforts being made to ensure comprehensibility (Krashen, 1993).

Sheltered subject matter teaching or *content-based language teaching* is an approach that provides students opportunities to learn content area subject matter in the second language, provides them with ESL methodology, and also takes advantage of the background knowledge and literacy provided by the first language (Krashen, 1993).

Third, there is *structured immersion*, which has four primary characteristics: comprehensible subject matter teaching in the second language; minimum use of the first language when needed for explanation; direct instruction of grammar; and pre-teaching of vocabulary. Krashen notes that there is little evidence which supports the effectiveness of direct grammar instruction or pre-teaching vocabulary (1993).

A fourth immersion approach is *submersion*. According to H. Douglas Brown, this way of treating second language learners is "really no treatment at all"; it "submerges" students in English-speaking content-area classes with no special foreign language instruction, assuming the students will "absorb" English through content-area learning (Brown, 1994).

The popular arguments for English-only immersion rest on the weak theoretical assumption that there is a direct relationship between the amount of exposure to English and academic learning in English (Cummins, 1988). The aim of immersion programs, as they are proposed for students in U.S. public schools, is to teach children English in a brief period of time, with no regard for developing and maintaining the first language. However, the well-known Canadian-style immersion program, while seen as an alternative to bilingual education, is, in fact, a bilingual education program (Krashen, 1993). CSI promotes and fosters bilingualism, rather than the replacement of the first language.

One key factor that must be considered is the population of students for whom immersion has proven to be an effective alternative. In Canada, immersion has been successful with middle-class students whose first language is the highly valued majority language. Contrary to the language learners in the Canadian-style immersion program, most of the bilingual education programs in our country serve many children from economically oppressed communities whose native languages are not highly valued by our society.

Nieto observes that if we wished to implement the CSI model in the United States as it has been successfully implemented in Canada, it would require that we place native English-speaking students in another language setting, rather than placing limited-English-proficient students in English-speaking classrooms. "Even the researchers associated with Canada's immersion program have cautioned against using it as a model with language-minority students in the United States" (Nieto, 1996).

While immersion programs may have proven to be successful in other countries and in working with adults in the United States, attempting to apply those same concepts and practices to children in U.S. public schools doesn't necessarily work because the change of context changes the effectiveness of the program: "the immersion model, if applied to language-minority students, would properly be called *submersion*" (Nieto, 1996).

According to Krashen, "submersion is rejected by all professionals as an option for limited-English-proficient children" (1993). Martin Carnoy, a professor of education at Stanford University, notes:

> It is a fact that European kids with highly educated parents who are immediately immersed in English are able to learn to break the code. And so if it were those kinds of children whom we were dealing with primarily, there would be no problem with this initiative [Proposition 227]. The real problem is that those aren't the majority of children (Stanford, 1998).

Because of the number of limited-English-proficient students attending our nation's public schools, it is critical that policies and practices be adopted that will benefit the greater population of students by increasing their opportunities to learn.

Webster defines *research* as close, careful study (1996). Such has been the case with second language learning; a vast body of evidence exists regarding practices and approaches to use that are most successful in helping learners acquire a second language. Many individuals have and will continue to encourage others to disregard what some of the best research in the field says. It may sound a lot easier and less expensive to provide students with intensive English instruction for a year or so and then mainstream them into English-speaking classrooms, but as Dr. Nancy Zelasko notes, "Learning a language is a difficult task which takes time. Even native English-speakers study English for 12 years of elementary and secondary school" (1998).

What is difficult for many to understand is that there is still a lot of stigma attached to limited-English-proficient students, especially students from particular ethnic minority groups.

Research shows that bilingual education is the best way to teach children English. Not only does it foster cognitive and linguistic growth in their native language, but bilingual education also fosters cognitive and linguistic growth in English. At the same time, bilingual education provides students with a sense that their native language and culture are valued in the school setting. Valuing students while providing them with proper and adequate resources in the learning environment will foster success better than any quick-fix remedy can.

It is rather ironic that, in a country that emphasizes the value of bilingualism during the secondary and post-secondary schooling years, many are emphatic about

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forcing school children to immediately acquire English, even at the expense of their native language. There is absolutely no question about the fact that mastering the English language is important for students to be able to participate fully and successfully as citizens in the United States. However, it is not good educational practice to implement a particular approach on a large scale simply because it has been proven to work in a particular context or for a particular few individuals. If this nation continues to implement educational policies and practices using a "bandwagon" approach, we will continue to deny opportunity to millions of children who will miss the boat.

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Highlights of Recent IDRA Activities

In November and December, IDRA worked with **6,902** teachers, administrators and parents through **106** training and technical assistance activities and **155** program sites in **12** states plus the United Kingdom. Topics included:

- ◆ Civil Rights Compliance
- ◆ IDRA *Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program* Youth Leadership Day
- ◆ STAR Center *Excellence and Equity through Technology Network* (EETNet)
- ◆ English as a Second Language for Recent Immigrant Students

Participating agencies and school districts included:

- ◇ Chama Valley Public Schools, New Mexico
- ◇ Dallas Independent School District (ISD), Texas
- ◇ Oklahoma Department of Education
- ◇ Greenville Public Schools, Mississippi
- ◇ Ysleta ISD, Texas

Activity Snapshot

Four campuses in a school district in San Antonio are working together to improve the quality of content area programs for limited-English-proficient (LEP) students. IDRA is helping by uniting teams of content area teachers, English as a second language (ESL) teachers, and campus administrators from four middle schools and junior high schools through the IDRA *Content Area Program Enhancement* (CAPE) project. The project is funded by the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA). The teams are focusing on the implementation of curricula and instruction that are culturally and linguistically appropriate. IDRA is providing teacher training, on-site technical assistance, task force facilitation, curriculum development and action research assistance. The project is now in its second year and is expected to impact more than 500 LEP students in the areas of math, science, social studies, English and reading.

Regularly, IDRA staff provides services to:

- ◆ public school teachers
- ◆ parents
- ◆ administrators
- ◆ other decision makers in public education

Services include:

- ◇ training and technical assistance
- ◇ evaluation
- ◇ serving as expert witnesses in policy settings and court cases
- ◇ publishing research and professional papers, books, videos and curricula

For information on IDRA services for your school district or other group, contact IDRA at 210/684-8180.

Challenges as We Enter a New Century: Teacher Renewal

Celebrating 25 Years

During the past 25 years, IDRA has worked with and trained more than 75,000 teachers. Throughout this tenure, we have regularly faced the vexing problem of trying to impart information and skills to teachers who have surrendered their vibrant visions for children to the lesser visions predominating in today's schools. Teachers often tell us their initial high expectations of "making a difference" have not been met. Mountains of paperwork and other bureaucratic procedures bog down their efforts to help children learn. They feel unappreciated and unrecognized by their schools and communities. Drained of hope and feeling overwhelmed, they frequently blame students and their families for the students' poor academic showing.

Research indicates that teachers who work with historically underachieving populations frequently seem the most desperate. They suffer burnout at disproportionately faster rates than their colleagues working in less challenging environments. They often feel devalued by the school that communicates an attitude that their students are incapable of high levels of learning despite their best efforts. Disheartened and disillusioned, they join the tens of thousands who have left the teaching profession less than five years after embarking on their careers.

Yet other teachers – of similar students and from families with similar characteristics, teaching in schools with few resources and equally burdened with paperwork – love their work and their students, feel they *do* make a difference, and help students succeed.

With so many factors being essentially the same, IDRA concluded there must be important factors that account for the contrast between similarly situated teachers. What we found was a prevailing campus climate in the schools of satisfied teachers: a climate characterized by enthusiastic acceptance of students, teachers, and administrators and observable mutual respect. Among teachers, collegiality and cooperation ruled workrooms, and teachers received full administrative support. We have concluded that this campus climate can be re-created for the benefit of teachers facing burn out.

IDRA's concept of teacher renewal is based on valuing of oneself and others. IDRA conceptualized, directed, and evaluated the first teacher retention effort funded by the Texas Education Agency, which enhanced the quality and retention of minority teachers and teachers in critical shortage areas. IDRA implemented *Project TNT (Teachers Need Teachers)*, an induction process for bilingual education teachers in which mentor teachers and beginning teachers were trained in the coaching process. Based on this experience, IDRA created a highly popular manual, *Starting Today... Steps to Success for Beginning Bilingual Educators*, to prevent new bilingual teachers from "sinking" during the stressful first year of teaching.

As IDRA helped schools find ways of retaining their experienced teachers, IDRA also developed the *Educator's Perspective Inventory* (EPI). This professional satisfaction and needs assessment instrument measures 10 facets of the professional experience, pinpointing particularly stressful aspects of an educator's work environment.

Through the *Multi-Age Early Childhood Education for Limited-English-Proficient Students* research study, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, IDRA led teachers to initiate research on the effects of multi-age grouping on LEP students' learning and development and to develop a model for such programs based on their research.

IDRA will continue to work hand-in-hand with teachers to develop renewed vigor and enthusiasm for teaching in a context of professional collegiality, administrative support for innovation and the achievement of individual goals that results in enhanced self-respect for teachers and success for all their students. We do so with a vision of teachers reconnected to their original visions – as individuals who make significant contributions to their students' lives, who see potential where others see only problems, and who shape the future one mind at a time.

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Intercultural Development Research Association

Celebrating 25 Years
1973-1998

IDRA Newsletter

ISSN 1069-5672 Volume XXVI, No. 3 March 1999

Math and Science Education: A Practical Equity Guide

Keiko Suda

Inside this issue:

- ◇ **Key facts about sexual harassment**
- ◇ **Equity assistance available**
- ◇ **Is your school sex equitable?**
- ◇ **Preserving our neighborhood public schools**

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The *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* established eight National Education Goals, including: "By the year 2000, the United States will be first in the world in mathematics and science achievement" (1994). In part, this goal aims to increase degree completion for women and minorities. Such a high standard for excellence cannot be achieved if equity is not part of the equation. The two ideas are inextricably linked.

"Equity without excellence would be a terrible waste of talent. Excellence without equity is a contradiction in terms," comments Maggie Ford, President of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) Educational Foundation (1998).

Research Documents Tentative Narrowing of the Gender Gap

As the year 2000 draws near, it is useful to revisit the research on the well-documented and highly-discussed gender gap in math and science to assess our progress toward the goal established in the *Educate America Act*.

A report published by the AAUW Educational Foundation in 1992 brought the gender gap in math and science to national attention. It revealed a significant gap in course enrollment at the secondary level, in addition to prevalent bias against girls (particularly minority girls) in curriculum materials and classroom instruction.

Since then, numerous studies confirmed these findings, including research conducted by David and Myra Sadker and documented in their book, *Failing at Fairness: How Our Schools Cheat Girls*. The Sadkers described the many inequities suffered by girls and boys in schools, including lack of interaction between teachers and girls in the classroom, plummeting self-esteem in teenage girls, gender barriers to higher education, and the miseducation of boys (1994).

Recent data reveals that the hard work of many educators has begun to pay off. A 1998 study published by the AAUW Educational Foundation entitled *Gender Gaps: Where Schools Still Fail Our Children* provides an updated picture of equity in schools. According to the updated study, the gender gap in math and science appears to be narrowing for certain indicators. The good news is that the actual number of courses taken by boys and girls is virtually equal in mathematics, and the gap has closed considerably in science.

In spite of these findings, challenges remain, as gender differences are still prevalent in the *kinds* of math and science courses taken. Predictably, the higher level math and science courses continue to be dominated by boys. The gender gap is particularly marked in physics, where girls' enrollment is significantly lower than boys'.

A shortfall of the study is that it does not disaggregate the data by race, so we have no idea what kind of "girls" are represented by the data. Assuming that the historical trend still holds true, it is likely that girls of color continue to lag behind males at greater rates than White girls.

By not analyzing the data by race, this aspect of the gender gap remains hidden (an *intra-gender gap*), creating the illusion that

Math and Science - continued on page 2

Math and Science - *continued from page 1*

the gender gap is narrowing across the board. This leaves girls and women of color to fend for themselves, lacking any resources that might have been allocated had the research clearly and accurately depicted the problem. Research that fully disaggregates and analyzes data by various factors will be crucial in obtaining a complete picture and creating appropriate solutions.

As science and technology fields continue to expand, a strong math and science foundation established early in the educational career is essential to ensuring that girls – particularly minority girls – are "plugged in" to the information age, not "logged out."

Importance of Mathematics and Science

While educators and education advocates spend great amounts of time and resources lamenting the gender gap in math and science education, the reason for this concern is often left out of the context of the discussion. So what if girls do not get as much math and science education as boys? The "so what" of this is rooted in research and documentation directly linking math and science to enrollment in college and therefore to economic well-being in adulthood.

For example, research shows that taking Algebra I and geometry early in high school – generally in the ninth and 10th grades – is the major predictor of a student's progression to college (Kane and Pelavin, 1990).

With this in mind, it is particularly encouraging to find that more girls entered Algebra I, Algebra II, geometry, pre-calculus, trigonometry and calculus in 1994 than in 1990. As science and technology fields continue to expand, a strong math and science foundation established early in the educational career is essential to ensuring that girls – particularly minority girls – are "plugged in" to the information age, not "logged out."

Useful Strategies

A variety of stakeholders in schools have a responsibility to ensure equitable outcomes for all students in math and science education. Parents, teachers and administrators need to work collaboratively to provide a framework for success in math and science free from the cracks that habitually plague schools and consume many students. The Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) is dedicated to ensuring equitable education for all students. It offers information and training in the priority area of gender equity based on 25 years of experience working for educational equity.

The following strategies for administrators, teachers and parents have been adapted from publications of the Women's Educational Equity Act Program (1990) in collaboration with the University of Nevada and the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (1996).

Strategies for Teachers

- Develop skills for working with parents. Welcome parents and encourage them to become involved in their children's education. Communicate consistently with them.
- Compensate for or replace biased materials in the classroom with anti-bias curriculum and resources.
- Serve on textbook adoption committees and participate in other activities to ensure the selection of nonbiased curriculum materials and resources.
- Select visuals for the classroom that reflect the contribution of women (particularly women of color) in math, science and technology.
- Never segregate students by gender or race in lines, study groups or other activities.
- Use role models of both sexes and different ethnicities as visiting resource people to the classroom.
- Publicly and privately acknowledge students' academic and intellectual accomplishments (not their efforts).
- Make sure that girls get enough practice

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12 Challenges as We Enter a New Century

The Intercultural Development Research Association *(IDRA)* is a non-profit organization with a 501(c)(3) tax exempt status. The purpose of the organization is to disseminate information concerning equality of educational opportunity.

The *IDRA Newsletter* (ISSN 1069-5672, © 1999) serves as a vehicle for communication with educators, school board members, decision-makers, parents, and the general public concerning the educational needs of all children in Texas and across the United States.

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Sexual Harassment:

What Parents and Students Should Know

María Aurora Yáñez, M.A.

Sexual harassment has long become a topic of concern for school districts as they struggle to deal with this type of gender discrimination. The Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) has written several articles to help keep school districts informed on sexual harassment laws, litigation, policies and districts' responsibilities (Penny-Velázquez, 1994; Penny-Velázquez 1995; Scott, 1996; Yáñez-Pérez, 1997; Yáñez, 1998). Below is a handout on sexual harassment that can be distributed to parents and students. A version in Spanish is on the next page.

Sexual Harassment - continued on page 4

What Parents and Students Should Know

What is sexual harassment?

- Sexual harassment is unwanted and unwelcome sexual behavior that makes you feel bad. Sexual harassment can include: spreading rumors, sexual cartoons, posters or jokes; touching; requesting sexual favors; or making physical attacks. Sexual harassment is not about sexual attraction, it is about *power*.
- Students are protected under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Title IX prohibits sexual harassment, a type of sex discrimination.

There are two identified types of sexual harassment:

- *Quid pro quo* sexual harassment basically means "you do something for me and I will do something for you." Examples include: A teacher threatens to flunk a student unless the student has sex with the teacher. A student threatens a classmate with spreading rumors about her if she refuses to go on a date with him.
- *Hostile environment* sexual harassment involves recurring behavior that creates a frightening, offensive and intimidating school environment. Examples include: Students get grabbed or insulted when they walk from class to class. Nasty remarks are written about lesbian or gay students in the restrooms.

Who does it happen to? What is the impact on the victim?

- Sexual harassment can happen males to males, males to females, females to males, and females to females. It can also occur student to student and adult to student.
- Victims of sexual harassment often feel confused, misunderstood, guilty, ashamed, angry, frightened, lonely, powerless and hopeless.

What can you do about it if it happens to you?

- Tell your parents, a friend or a trusted adult. You do not have to handle the situation alone.
- Tell harassers to *stop*. It is your right.
- Inform the school by telling a teacher, counselor, principal, school or district Title IX coordinator, superintendent, school board member and/or state education agency. Keep insisting until the harassment stops.
- Keep a detailed record of what has happened (who, what, when, where and how).

Who can you turn to if you or someone you know has been a victim of sexual harassment?

- Title IX coordinator or manager: Most districts have individuals at the campus or district level whose job is to investigate complaints. If your school does not have a Title IX coordinator, contact a principal, counselor or teacher.
- Office for Civil Rights (OCR): If you feel the district has not done enough to help you, call or write OCR. OCR is the federal agency that enforces Title IX (Office for Civil Rights, Family Policy Compliance Office, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C. 20202-4605; Phone 202-260-3887).

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Sexual Harassment *- continued from page 3*

Resources

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María Aurora Yáñez, M.A., is a research assistant in the IDRA Division of Research and Evaluation. Comments and questions may be directed to her via e-mail at contact@idra.org.

Lo Qué Deben Saber Los Padres de Familia y Estudiantes

¿Qué es el hostigamiento sexual?

- *El hostigamiento sexual es el comportamiento sexual no deseado que te hace sentir mal. El hostigamiento sexual puede incluir: rumores, dibujos animados, pósteres o chistes sexuales, roces, pedir favores sexuales, o ataques físicos. El hostigamiento sexual no es atracción sexual es sobre* poder.
- *Estudiantes están protegidos bajo el Título IX de las Enmiendas Educativas de 1972. El Título IX prohibe el acoso sexual, que se define como un tipo de discriminación.*

Se han identificado dos tipos de hostigamiento sexual:

- Quid pro quo: *Fundamentalmente significa que tú haces algo por mi y yo hago algo por tí. Ejemplos incluyen: Un maestro amenaza con reprobar a un estudiante si no se presta a tener relaciones con él. Un estudiante amenaza a su compañera con divulgar rumores negativos de ella si no sale con él.*
- Ambiente hostil: *Incluye comportamiento que no cesa y que por consecuencia crea un ambiente intimidante, ofensivo y hostil. Ejemplos incluyen: Estudiantes que son tocados en cualquier parte del cuerpo o insultados cuando van a clases. También cuando comentarios maliciosos sobre estudiantes homosexuales son escritos en los baños.*

¿Quiénes son las víctimas? ¿Qué impacto tiene hacia ellas?

- *El hostigamiento sexual se puede presentar entre hombres y hombres, hombres y mujeres, mujeres y hombres, o mujeres y mujeres. También lo podemos notar entre estudiante y estudiante y entre adultos y estudiantes.*
- *Las víctimas de acoso sexual suelen sentir confusión, incomprensión, culpabilidad, vergüenza, rabia, temor, soledad, impotencia, y/o desesperación.*

¿Qué puedes hacer?

- *Dícelo a tus padres, a una amiga, o a un adulto confiable. No tienes que afrontar la situación sola(o).*
- *Ponle un* alto *al acosador. Es tu derecho.*
- *Informa a la escuela diciéndole a una maestra, consejero, directora, coordinadora sobre Título IX en tu escuela o distrito, superintendente, representate de la mesa directiva y/o la agencia de educación estatal. Continúa insistiendo hasta que termine el hostigamiento.*
- *Mantén un récord detallado sobre lo qué ha pasado (¿Quién? ¿Qué? ¿Cuándo? ¿Donde? y ¿Cómo?).*

¿A quién puedes acudir si tú o álguien que tú conoces ha sido víctima de el hostigamiento sexual?

- *Coordinador sobre Título IX: Muchos distritos tienen personas en las escuelas o el distrito cuyo trabajo es investigar las quejas de este tipo. Si tu escuela no tiene una coordinadora, dirígete a una directora, consejero, o maestra.*
- *Oficina de Derechos Civiles (OCR): Si piensas que el distrito no ha hecho lo suficiente para ayudarte, llama o escríbele a OCR. OCR es la agencia federal que impone el Título IX* (Office for Civil Rights, Family Policy Compliance Office, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C. 20202-4605; Phone 202-260-3887).

– Intercultural Development Research Association

From the IDRA South Central Collaborative for Equity

Free School Improvement Training and Technical Assistance

In this era of school reform and academic excellence for all students regardless of race, sex, national origin and economic level, we are confronted with many challenges as we work to create schools that work for all learners. The Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) has been funded by the U.S. Department of Education to provide assistance to schools. This funding is directed through the nation's network of equity assistance centers (formerly called, desegregation assistance center). The center that serves Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas is the IDRA South Central Collaborative for Equity.

Districts are eligible to receive a minimum of two to three days of assistance and training to help them ensure equitable educational opportunity for all learners and to assist all learners in reaching high standards of academic excellence. This assistance and training is free to schools and includes:

- staff development,
- materials development,
- strategic planning,
- classroom demonstrations,
- observations and collaboration,
- focus group and development of team assistance, and
- other forms of assistance as specified by the campuses or districts to meet their local needs.

Additionally, IDRA staff can deliver this assistance and training directly to teachers, administrators, non-certified personnel, parents, students, school board members and members of the community. **In order to take advantage of this assistance, school personnel can complete the form on the next page and send to IDRA by fax (210-684-5389) or mail (IDRA, 5835 Callaghan Road, Suite 350, San Antonio, Texas 78228).**

Schools in other states, may receive assistance from the equity assistance center that serves their region (ask IDRA or the U.S. Department of Education for contact information). For more information on the IDRA South Central Collaborative for Equity, contact Bradley Scott, M.A., at IDRA (210/684-8180; fax 210/684-5389) or visit the IDRA web site (www.idra.org).

It is important that we work together to give every student an equitable opportunity to achieve. The IDRA equity assistance center is eager to support you in that effort. It is up to you to request the support. Together, we can make a difference for students in schools.

Desegregation Assistance Modules Available

Equity in Counseling and Advising Students: Keeping the Options Open

by Josephine F. Garza, M.A., and Alva E. McNeal, M.A.

This training module is designed for trainers to assist classroom teachers and school administrators. It provides cross-cultural counseling practices that can be used when working with culturally diverse populations. Use this tool to help participants become familiar with counseling roles that promote equity in a multicultural society. This 42-page module comes with session outlines, a pre- and post-test, and handout and transparency masters (ISBN 1-878550-40-3; 1997 Second Edition).

Sex Stereotyping and Bias: Their Origin and Effects

by Reeve Love, Ph.D., and Alicia Salinas Sosa, Ph.D.

This training module is designed for trainers to assist classroom teachers in identifying sources and effects of sex stereotyping and bias in the classroom and in society as a whole. Use this tool to help participants become aware of the socio-economic and psychological effects of sex-role stereotyping and of ways in which gender bias and stereotyping are manifested in the classroom setting. This 57-page module comes with session outlines, a pre- and post-test, handout and transparency masters, and visuals (ISBN 1-878550-57-8; 1995 Revised).

Avoiding Sex Bias in Counseling

by Josephine F. Garza, M.A., and Joe R. Gonzales, M.A.

This training module for trainers allows counselors the opportunity to review concepts and strategies that can be used to provide students with sex-fair guidance. Participants will become cognizant of historical perspectives on the role of women in the United States. Use this module to familiarize participants with counseling practices that reflect sex equity and with issues of sex bias in testing. This 43-page module comes with session outlines, a pre- and post-test, and handout and transparency masters (ISBN 1-878550-58-6; 1995 Revised).

Each module is $8.50 and is available from IDRA at 5835 Callaghan Road, Suite 350, San Antonio, Texas 78228-1190; 210/684-8180; fax 210/684-5389; e-mail: contact@idra.org.

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EQUITY ASSISTANCE NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY
Educational Equity Programs

District

Address

City State Zip

Phone (   )   -   Fax (   )   -

Last Name First Name MI

Job Title Date

Instructions: Please indicate the extent to which your district needs assistance in the items below.

		Extent of Need		
		None	Some	Great
Student, parent, community involvement	A.	○	○	○
Employment practices and employee relations	B.	○	○	○
Implementation of desegregation plan	C.	○	○	○
Bilingual education and/or ESL implementation	D.	○	○	○
Promoting gender equity	E.	○	○	○
Non-discriminatory/non-traditional student assignment and placement	F.	○	○	○
Non-discriminatory student discipline and treatment	G.	○	○	○
Student engagement and academic excellence	H.	○	○	○
Non-racist/non-sexist curriculum development	I.	○	○	○
Race relations and human relations training	J.	○	○	○
Prejudice reduction in schools and classrooms	K.	○	○	○
Cross-cultural conflict resolution	L.	○	○	○
Reducing hate crimes and other inappropriate activities	M.	○	○	○
Sexual and racial harassment reduction (adult-student - peer-peer)	N.	○	○	○
Strategies for promoting equity and excellence for all learners	O.	○	○	○
Development of supplemental programs and materials for LEP students	P.	○	○	○
Closing the minority-majority achievement gap	Q.	○	○	○
Non-discriminatory practices in Title IX gender equity	R.	○	○	○
Equity-based early childhood education	S.	○	○	○
Meeting federal civil rights requirements	T.	○	○	○
Non-discriminatory counseling practices and methods	U.	○	○	○
Multicultural education and validating student's culture in the classroom	V.	○	○	○
Training for diversity in schools and classrooms	W.	○	○	○
Addressing test bias in student assessment	X.	○	○	○
Appropriate language identification, assessment and placement	Y.	○	○	○
Strategic planning for equity-based excellence in systemic school reform	Z.	○	○	○

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Math and Science – continued from page 2

to be confident with their math skills.

- Use slates or individual dry erase boards to encourage low pressure and spontaneous answers.
- Incorporate math problems that call for many approaches with several right answers.
- Provide opportunities for estimating, guessing and checking.
- Recognize students' math achievement, especially improvement. Create a "math star" bulletin board.
- Help girls recognize that it is okay to acknowledge their own mathematical ability without feeling embarrassed or conceited.
- Create opportunities for cooperative learning and minimize overt competition between classmates.
- Practice math skills on computers.
- Use girls as peer tutors in math.

Strategies for Administrators

- Assess equity practices in counseling for math and science course enrollment and careers. Take any necessary corrective action such as equity training.
- Be responsive to concerns of parents, teachers and students about perceived inequities or bias in curriculum materials, programs or instruction.
- Arrange programs, activities and meetings involving parents around their work, day care and transportation in order to facilitate their full participation in the education of their children.
- Have staff in-service sessions that focus on equitable instructional and counseling practices.
- Encourage schoolwide participation in commemorative days that are inclusive and representative of women, especially women of color, in non-traditional pursuits.

Strategies for Parents

- Do not set up negative expectations for a child with phrases such as, "She'll probably have trouble in math – I always did," or "Watch out for him – you know how boys are when they get mad."
- Review textbooks and other materials for bias. Bring all related concerns to the attention of teachers and administrators.
- Participate in the textbook selection and review process.
- Ask children open-ended questions about school, encourage them to talk about their dreams and really listen to their responses.
- Encourage children that they can be or do anything they dream of. Talk about future math and science courses and careers with daughters as well as sons. If you do not know what some of the options may be, find out together.
- Recognize children's successes and achievements, especially those of daughters in math and science classes. Encourage them as they strive for excellence.
- Monitor homework for proper format, thoroughness, completion and timeliness.
- Ensure that children arrive at school physically and mentally healthy and ready to learn.
- Meet and ask questions of all of your child's teachers. Ask for regular progress reports as often as you wish (weekly, monthly).

According to the National Institute for Science Education (Kahle, 1998), efforts to ensure equitable outcomes in mathematics and science education should be driven by the need for the United States to remain economically, scientifically and technologically competitive with other developed nations. If the inherent unfairness and injustice of race and gender discrimination is not enough to mobilize financial and human resources, I suppose a threat to the economic and technological status of the nation should do the trick.

A variety of stakeholders in schools have a responsibility to ensure equitable outcomes for all students in math and science education. Parents, teachers and administrators need to work collaboratively to provide a framework for success in math and science free from the cracks that habitually plague schools and consume many students.

Resources

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A Jump on Tomorrow

Sixth Annual IDRA

La Semana del Niño

The Week of the Young Child

Early Childhood Educator's Institute™

Meet nationally-known facilitators!
Interact with other early childhood educators!
Visit schools showcasing innovative programs!
Take home lots of ideas for your classroom!
Enjoy San Antonio during Fiesta!
Meet author Terri Ybañez!

April 20 through April 22, 1999
San Antonio Airport Hilton
Presented by: Intercultural Development Research Association

Monday
Pre-institute seminar on dual language programs.

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Tuesday
Morning session led by Dr. María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel, IDRA executive director. Dr. Josefina Tinajero will be the keynote speaker. A series of concurrent sessions will be held in the morning and again in the afternoon. At another location, hundreds of early childhood educators from across the state will focus on working with families in a distance learning session via video conference. Book signing and wine and cheese reception in the evening with illustrator Terri Ybañez.

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Wednesday
School visits in the morning. Dr. Antonio Gonzalez will present a session on brain research and literacy. The "Technology Fest" concurrent sessions will be held in the afternoon.

• • • • • • • • • • • • • •

Thursday
School visits in the morning followed by special sessions on reading fun and early literacy. The conference will close with a luncheon featuring keynote speaker Rebeca María Barrera, president of the National Latino Children's Institute.

School Visits

Take this opportunity to visit model early childhood centers. Institute participants will travel to high-performing, high-minority sites in the San Antonio area that are effectively working with diverse learners. These include Head Start classrooms, dual language bilingual programs, a developmentally appropriate multi-age program, a Title I schoolwide program, a dual language magnet program and a national Blue Ribbon school.

Concurrent Sessions

Concurrent sessions will be held throughout the institute to provide participants with the latest on language and literacy development. The sessions will be led by practitioners who have tested strategies in the classroom. The sessions will also feature a "Technology Fest" that demonstrates ways of integrating technology into early childhood instruction.

Registration

Institute and Pre-institute: $150 each
Fee includes reception, institute and pre-institute sessions, school visits, and Thursday luncheon
Institute: $150 each
Fee includes reception, institute sessions, school visits, and Monday and Thursday luncheons
Pre-institute only: $75 each
Reception only: $20 each
To register, contact IDRA for a registration form.

Pre-institute on Dual Language Programs

Monday, April 19, 1999

This pre-institute on literacy is designed to provide early childhood educators with a whole day of training and preparation focused on early childhood dual language programs. Featured speakers include: Irma Trujillo and Dr. Mari Riojas.

Hotel Information

The institute will be held at the San Antonio Airport Hilton. The deadline to receive the special room rate of $95 (single or double) plus state and local taxes is April 4. Reservations must be made by the participant. Call 1-800-HILTONS.

For more information or a registration brochure contact Hilaria Bauer or Carol Chavez at IDRA, 210/684-8180; e-mail: contact@idra.org.

Sponsored by the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA). Supporting IDRA projects include the South Central Collaborative for Equity (formerly called the Desegregation Assistance Center) and the STAR Center (the comprehensive regional assistance center that serves Texas via a collaboration of IDRA, the Dana Center at UT Austin and RMC Research Corporation).

How to Tell if Your School is Confronting Sex Discrimination

[Editor's note: The following is a reprint from "Action for Better Schools," the newsletter of the National Coalition of Education Activists.]

To assess how much progress your school is making in eliminating gender bias, see how many of the following questions you are able to answer with a "yes." To get accurate answers, talk with other parents, students and school staff, and observe classes and extracurricular activities.

1. Do teachers call equally on boys and girls in the classroom? Do they give them equal attention and feedback to enhance learning? An example of what you do not want to see is teachers telling boys they can solve difficult problems themselves, while telling girls how to solve them.
2. Do school staff have *zero tolerance* for sexual harassment and gender-based teasing? Do they actively work to prevent it and always confront it when it arises? (A great resource is *Flirting or Hurting* by N. Stein and L. Sjostrom, Center for Research on Women, 106 Central Street, Wellsley, Mass. 02181; $19.95.)
3. Are activities co-ed unless there is a valid reason for separating boys and girls? Examples of valid exceptions may include bathrooms and contact sports.
4. Do materials – such as posters, books and films – in all subject areas and extracurricular activities represent women and men equally?
5. Do materials represent men and women as equally strong and weak, dependent and independent, powerful and subordinate, etc.? Distinctions can be subtle but devastating. Watch for materials that show girls as consistently younger, smaller, weaker, more prone to injury or illness, more likely to be victims, and so on.
6. Are women and girls represented in all projections of the future, as well as all historical or past events? (Useful materials are available from the National Women's History Project, 7738 Bell Road, Windsor, California 95492-8518; 707-838-6000.)
7. Do girls and boys have access to the same quality and quantity of playground space and equipment, including athletic gear?
8. Are boys and girls disciplined equally? Some parents report that girls are "let off" in exchange for flirting or acting demure. Others say school rules are sometimes circumvented to keep male students on athletic teams. Both are inappropriate.
9. Are boys and girls treated as equally strong and competent?
10. Are staff members sensitive to the destructive nature of commenting disproportionately on girls' looks and clothing?
11. Do boys and girls share equally in all resources available, for example, federal and state subsidies or funds supplied by parents' and boosters' clubs? (A useful publication is *How Schools Can Stop Shortchanging Girls (and Boys): Gender-Equity Strategies* by K. Wheeler, Center for Research on Women, 106 Central Street, Wellesley, Mass. 02181; $9.)
12. Are school staff at all levels of authority proportionally male and female, so they serve as role models?
13. Have all school staff received training in how to handle and correct sexual discrimination and harassment they see or receive reports of? Have students and parents been offered similar workshops?
14. Does the school have, distribute and follow a policy defining sexual harassment and specifying consequences and remedies for staff and students? Ideally, this policy should be given to parents, students and staff at the beginning of each school year and again if they report any incidents.
15. Is there an active effort to inform the community and media about sex equity in the schools?

Reprinted from "Action for Better Schools" (Winter 1995-96; pp. 3, 7) with permission from National Coalition of Education Activists.

Did you know?

Six forms of gender bias have been identified by researchers.

Invisibility	Women and members of minority groups are under-represented in curricular materials, in text and/or illustrations.
Stereotyping	Traditional and rigid roles or attributes are assigned to a group, whether by gender or ethnicity.
Imbalance and Selectivity	Bias is perpetuated by presenting only one interpretation of an issue, a situation or a group of people.
Unreality	Textbooks or other curricula materials present an unrealistic view of women's history and contemporary life experience.
Fragmentation and Isolation	Issues relating to women and minorities are separated from the main body of the text.
Linguistic Bias	Curricular materials reflect the discriminatory nature of our language.

– Sadker and Sadker. *Sex Equity Handbook for Schools* (New York: Longman, Inc., 1982)

For Our Children:
Preserving Our Neighborhood Public Schools

More than 250 people rallied in support of neighborhood public schools and opposition to school vouchers in San Antonio one Saturday morning. Sponsored by the Coalition for Equity and Excellence in Public Education, community leaders, parents, teachers, children and youth, advocacy organizations, educators and policy makers gathered at a local high school where they cheered, "No school vouchers in Texas!"

"Vouchers are not the answer," said Martha Ortiz a parent advocate who spoke at the rally. "The public system offers an education for *all* children; the private [system] does not."

"No voucher could give me better principals, teachers and opportunities than I have now," said Candie Bocanegra, a student at Memorial High School in Edgewood Independent School District (ISD). "A student's education should not be gambled for any voucher that is given… The best way to strengthen public schools is to strengthen the public schools."

The Coalition for Excellence and Equity in Public Education is a San Antonio-based coalition of community organizations and individuals who support the use of public money for neighborhood public schools and who oppose any effort to divert public tax funds to subsidize private education. The group is dedicated to improving neighborhood public schools by helping to channel the community's support for public education. Several organizations have been involved in the coalition. They include:

- The Coalition for Public Schools
- Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA)
- Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of San Antonio
- Edgewood ISD
- Families United for Education: Getting Organized *[Familias unidas para la educación: ganando organizadas]*
- *Grupo de Los Cien*, San Antonio
- Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund
- San Antonio ISD
- Texas Federation of Teachers
- Texas Freedom Network
- Texas State Teachers Association.

"I am insulted that voucher proponents think that our communities would be content with something that is restricted, insufficient, and belongs to someone else," said Dr. María Robledo Montecel, executive director of IDRA. "Neighborhood schools are your schools, and if today, they are restricted or insufficient it is largely because we have had to fight for equity and for our children's rights at every turn. And if today, your neighborhood schools are not what you want, fight to make them better because they are yours. Private schools are not."

Speaking for the Greater Corinth Baptist Church and the Baptist Ministers' Union, Rev. Dr. Carl Johnson told the crowd, "Vouch-

> **"We know that vouchers will not improve our local neighborhood schools. Vouchers jeopardize equity. Vouchers jeopardize school accountability. Vouchers jeopardize the continued existence of neighborhood schools."**
>
> – Zane Chalfant is the former executive director of Texas PTA

For Our Children *– continued on page 11*

IDRA Policy Briefs Released

The Intercultural Development Research Association has developed a series of policy briefs on four key issues in education. The series is being released in February and March of 1999 to inform community and policy decisions during the Texas legislative session.

The series and associated data are available on-line at www.idra.org (free) or by contacting IDRA for copies ($7 each). Excerpts of the findings and recommendations are being printed in the January, February and April 1999 issues of the *IDRA Newsletter*.

Titles Include:

- ✓ ***Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs in Texas – What is Known; What is Needed***
- ✓ ***Missing: Texas Youth – Dropout and Attrition in Texas Public High Schools***
- ✓ ***Failing Our Children – Finding Alternatives to In-grade Retention***
- ✓ ***Students for Sale – The Use of Public Money for Private Schooling***

For more information, contact the IDRA Institute for Policy and Leadership, Dr. Albert Cortez, director, at 5835 Callaghan Road, Suite 350 • San Antonio, Texas 78228-1190 • phone 210/684-8180 • fax 210/684-5389

For Our Children - *continued from page 10*

ers reward those who have and penalize those who have not."

Policy makers and public officials who participated in the rally included U.S. Rep. Charlie Gonzales; State Rep. Art Reyna; State Rep. Juan Solis; State Board of Education member Dr. Joe Bernal; Superintendents Dr. David Splitek (San Antonio ISD), Dr. Ed Rawlinson (Northside ISD) and Dr. Dolores Muñoz (Edgewood ISD); and school board members Mary Esther Bernal (San Antonio ISD), Manuel Garza (Edgewood ISD) and James Howard (San Antonio ISD).

"You don't improve public schools by making them weaker with vouchers," commented Rep. Gonzales.

Senator Gregory Luna was unable to attend the rally, but sent a statement that was read aloud by State Rep. Solis: "The performance of Texas public school students has increased over the last decade, especially for our students from low-income families… I have always been committed to strengthening our public schools and holding them accountable for results! I reaffirm that commitment to you today and will continue to oppose any legislation that would harm our children or our public schools. All children deserve access to good schools and we must work together to make our neighborhood schools the best that they can be."

Reading a statement from the Coalition for Equity and Excellence in Public Education, Zane Chalfant said: "We know that vouchers will not improve our local neighborhood schools. Vouchers jeopardize equity. Vouchers jeopardize school accountability. Vouchers jeopardize the continued existence of neighborhood schools. Most private schools do not have the capacity or capability to absorb large numbers of students with special needs. Our children and our communities deserve better." Mr. Chalfant is the former executive director of Texas PTA.

He concluded: "The Coalition for Equity and Excellence in Public Education knows that *the only way to strengthen our public education system in San Antonio and in Texas is to strengthen and support our neighborhood public schools.* Education for *all*, *not* for the *few*. We demand excellent neighborhood public schools, and we will fight for them."

The coalition plans to continue to voice its concerns regarding publicly-funded vouchers and will host another community event in April.

Note: Additional information is available on-line at www.idra.org. The information includes copies of the statements by the coalition and Senator Luna, a description of the coalition and its participants, and a list of groups that oppose school vouchers.

HIGHLIGHTS OF RECENT IDRA ACTIVITIES

In January, IDRA worked with **7,395** teachers, administrators and parents through **77** training and technical assistance activities and 155 program sites in **12** states plus the United Kingdom. Topics included:

- Dropout Prevention
- Coordinated Funding
- National Association for Bilingual Education parent institute
- Classroom Management for Student Success
- *IDRA Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program*
- Thematic Units for the Elementary Classroom

Activity Snapshot

The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, created by the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA), is an internationally-recognized cross-age tutoring program in schools across the United States, Puerto Rico, Great Britain and Brazil. Since its inception in San Antonio in 1984, the program has kept more than 5,000 students in school, young people who were previously at risk of dropping out. According to the Valued Youth creed, *all students are valuable, none is expendable.* This philosophy is helping more than 145 schools in 17 cities keep 98 percent of Valued Youth students in school, keeping these young people in the classroom and learning. For more than 14 years, IDRA and The Coca-Cola Foundation have worked together in a unique partnership that is making a visible difference in the lives of more than 68,500 children, families and educators.

Participating agencies and school districts included:

- Texas Education Agency
- San Juan II, Puerto Rico
- Blyeville Public Schools, Arkansas
- Alamo Heights Independent School District (ISD), Texas
- Clovis Municipal Schools, New Mexico
- Weatherford ISD, Texas

Regularly, IDRA staff provides services to:

- public school teachers
- parents
- administrators
- other decision makers in public education

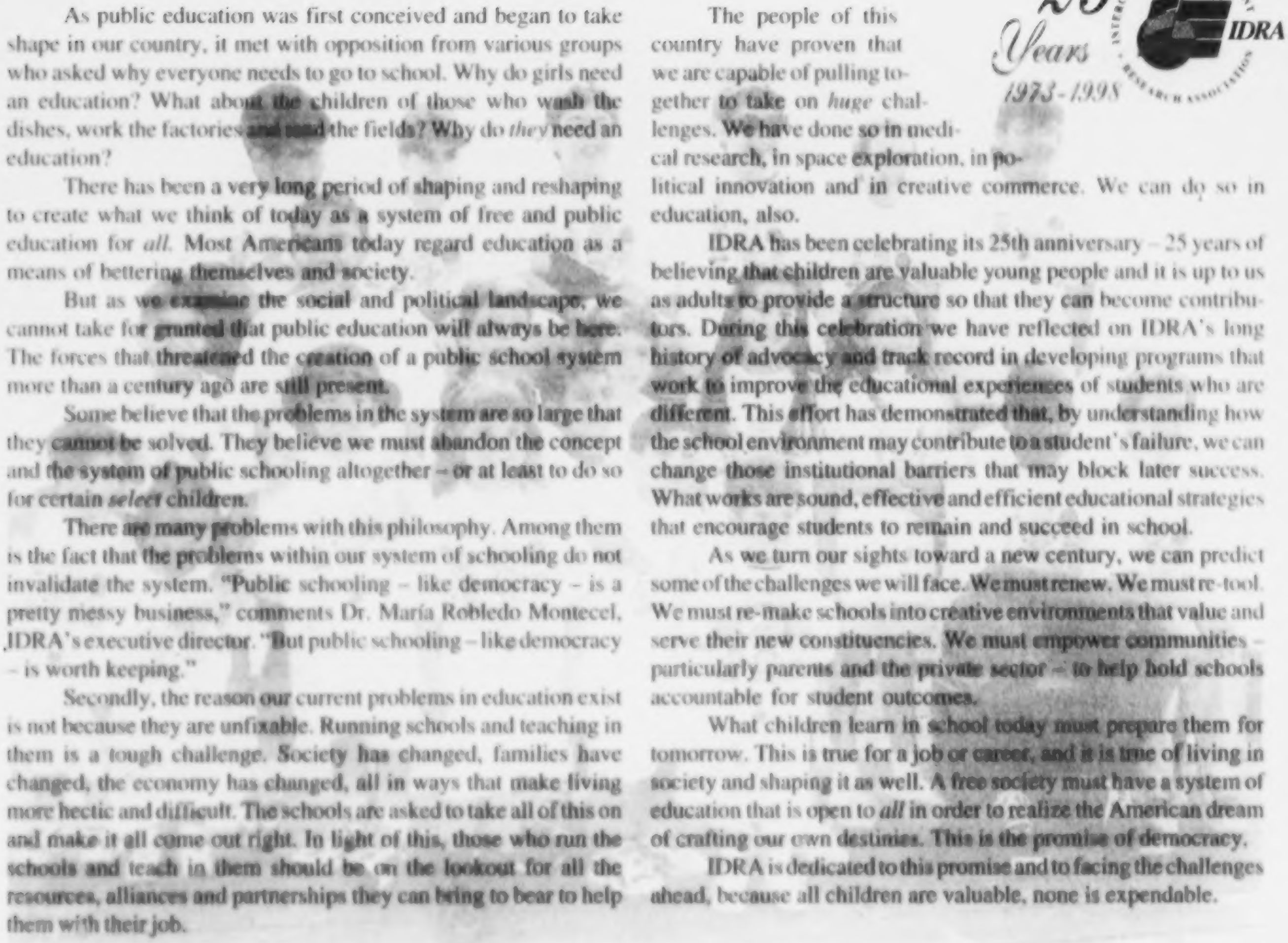
Services include:

- training and technical assistance
- evaluation
- serving as expert witnesses in policy settings and court cases
- publishing research and professional papers, books, videos and curricula

For information on IDRA services for your school district or other group, contact IDRA at 210/684-8180.

Challenges as We Enter a New Century

Celebrating 25 Years 1973-1998



As public education was first conceived and began to take shape in our country, it met with opposition from various groups who asked why everyone needs to go to school. Why do girls need an education? What about the children of those who wash the dishes, work the factories and tend the fields? Why do *they* need an education?

There has been a very long period of shaping and reshaping to create what we think of today as a system of free and public education for *all*. Most Americans today regard education as a means of bettering themselves and society.

But as we examine the social and political landscape, we cannot take for granted that public education will always be here. The forces that threatened the creation of a public school system more than a century ago are still present.

Some believe that the problems in the system are so large that they cannot be solved. They believe we must abandon the concept and the system of public schooling altogether – or at least to do so for certain *select* children.

There are many problems with this philosophy. Among them is the fact that the problems within our system of schooling do not invalidate the system. "Public schooling – like democracy – is a pretty messy business," comments Dr. María Robledo Montecel, IDRA's executive director. "But public schooling – like democracy – is worth keeping."

Secondly, the reason our current problems in education exist is not because they are unfixable. Running schools and teaching in them is a tough challenge. Society has changed, families have changed, the economy has changed, all in ways that make living more hectic and difficult. The schools are asked to take all of this on and make it all come out right. In light of this, those who run the schools and teach in them should be on the lookout for all the resources, alliances and partnerships they can bring to bear to help them with their job.

The people of this country have proven that we are capable of pulling together to take on *huge* challenges. We have done so in medical research, in space exploration, in political innovation and in creative commerce. We can do so in education, also.

IDRA has been celebrating its 25th anniversary – 25 years of believing that children are valuable young people and it is up to us as adults to provide a structure so that they can become contributors. During this celebration we have reflected on IDRA's long history of advocacy and track record in developing programs that work to improve the educational experiences of students who are different. This effort has demonstrated that, by understanding how the school environment may contribute to a student's failure, we can change those institutional barriers that may block later success. What works are sound, effective and efficient educational strategies that encourage students to remain and succeed in school.

As we turn our sights toward a new century, we can predict some of the challenges we will face. We must renew. We must re-tool. We must re-make schools into creative environments that value and serve their new constituencies. We must empower communities – particularly parents and the private sector – to help hold schools accountable for student outcomes.

What children learn in school today must prepare them for tomorrow. This is true for a job or career, and it is true of living in society and shaping it as well. A free society must have a system of education that is open to *all* in order to realize the American dream of crafting our own destinies. This is the promise of democracy.

IDRA is dedicated to this promise and to facing the challenges ahead, because all children are valuable, none is expendable.

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IDRA Newsletter

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Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program: The Value of Video Conferencing

Rogelio López del Bosque, Ed.D.

Inside this Issue:

- ◇ **How to choose books**
- ◇ **Sec. Reilly on vouchers**
- ◇ **Anti-social promotion bandwagon**
- ◇ **Use of technology case study**

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For a second time, the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) has held a series of live video conferences for 300 Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutors in 18 schools in 12 separate cities. The participation of this number of students could only happen by connecting students in four separate cities at a time.

It was all made possible by the efforts, cooperation and direct involvement of:

- *Universidad Autonoma de México* in San Antonio;
- University of Texas Pan America in Edinburg, Texas;
- University of Texas at Brownsville;
- ALCATEL Cable Company in Greenwich, England;
- University of Texas Health and Science School in Houston;
- Grady High School in Atlanta; and
- East Birmingham College in Birmingham, England.

However, the students were responsible for the event's success because of their liveliness, energy and pride. This cutting-edge use of technology proved to offer a unique learning experience for everyone involved.

The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, created by IDRA, is an internationally-recognized cross-age tutoring program. Since its inception in 1984, the program has kept more than 5,500 students in school, young people who were previously at risk of dropping out.

According to the Valued Youth creed, *all students are valuable, none is expendable*. This philosophy is helping more than 157 schools in 16 cities keep 98 percent of Valued Youths in school, keeping these young people in the classroom and learning.

The program is in schools in California; New Mexico; Illinois; Puerto Rico; Texas; and Washington, D.C., as well as Brazil and Great Britain. Given this global scene, we were excited to be able to bring together so many students at the same time to communicate in a matter of seconds. Many of the students communicated with each other via fax and as key pals (electronic pen pals) prior to the video conference. They then had the opportunity to meet each other live across state boundaries and the Atlantic Ocean through the video conferences.

The Video Conference Experience

As we started our video conference from each hosting city, the students exuded great warmth and pride in their cities, their schools and themselves as they made their introductions and welcomed students from the other sites. Some students went as far as to create sophisticated video tapes to be aired as part of their introduction. Students at one site in particular made their introduction in Spanish and in their *Charro* outfits as a means of pride in their city, heritage and language as well as in themselves and the program. A student from Birmingham, England – knowing that many of the tutors in Texas speak Spanish – introduced himself with a very warm, "*Hola, como estan.*"

The students took turns asking questions to their key pals. They had

Video Conferencing – continued on page 2

Video Conferencing – *continued from page 1*

prepared their questions well beforehand. The questions varied, but most were about being in the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program and about their tutees (the younger students they tutor) as well as about their schools, hobbies and music (of course).

By watching the manner in which students came forth, asked questions and interacted with each other, observers would not have guessed that some of these students had been considered introverts or shy by their teachers. Perhaps this change can be attributed to the personal growth the students have experienced through the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program. Or maybe it was the fact that the video conferences were among the ways that the tutors are acknowledged and validated for their work and contribution.

Connecting in Great Britain

In the United States, the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program has been recognized as an exemplary program by the U.S. Department of Education's Program Effectiveness Panel (for inclusion in the National Diffusion Network), the Corporation for National and Community Service, the Peter F. Drucker Foundation for Nonprofit Management, the Texas Education Agency, and the former U.S. President George Bush, to name a few. IDRA has compiled numerous years of research showing what the program has done in the lives of thousands of students who at one time or another may have been considered to be a major problem for the school.

SCCE

Three years ago, the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program was introduced to educators and community leaders in Great Britain. The nation's Department for Education and Employment (DFEE) – the equivalent to the U.S. Department of Education – has already recommended the program as an effective program for working with students considered at-risk of dropping out in England. Mr. Charles Clark, minister for school standards in the DFEE, has visited the school sites in Birmingham. He has praised the program and is recommending it to other schools. The Commission on Racial Equality has also recommended the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program as an effective program that reaches and positively impacts minority children.

The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program has certain core elements that research has shown to be effective, it also incorporates support components that can be adapted to each school's situation.

In England for example, the program focuses on students in behavioral centers who have already been "excluded" (expelled), particularly minority children. For them, the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program has opened a world of abilities, talents and accomplishments that participating students have never experienced before. Students in these centers often go on to the next level of schooling, but those who do not, leave with skills for tutoring, teaching and working with young children. For many students, validation of their abilities, field trips, role model speakers and even mentors has opened many doors.

Connecting with Students

In several participating schools, preliminary findings have already indicated that the program's early intervention with these "excluded" students, along with other strong programs, has contributed to the decline of the exclusion rate as it has the dropout rate in the United States.

Based on IDRA's research, the reasons for students' dropping out have been:

- academic failure,
- financial need,
- boredom,
- personal problems, and
- isolation.

The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program's answers to these are:

- high expectations and high motivation,
- academic success,
- financial assistance,
- belonging and contribution, and
- inclusion.

The video conferences are an extension of this response in that they are designed to focus on the tutors and are conducted by the tutors themselves (Cantu

Video Conferencing – *continued on page 6*

In This Issue...

3 **Read It Again! How to Select...**

4 **Highlights of Recent IDRA Activities**

5 **What Really Matters in American Education**

7 **Anti-Social Promotion Bandwagon**

The Intercultural Development Research Association *(IDRA)* is a non-profit organization with a 501(c)(3) tax exempt status. The purpose of the organization is to disseminate information concerning equality of educational opportunity.

The *IDRA Newsletter* (ISSN 1069-5672, © 1999) serves as a vehicle for communication with educators, school board members, decision-makers, parents, and the general public concerning the educational needs of all children in Texas and across the United States.

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Read It Again!

How to Select Quality Literature for Young Children

Hilaria Bauer, M.A.

Throughout my years as a teacher and children's literature fan and advocate, I have been asked this question time after time: "How can you select quality children's literature?" Well, in this area, I have had both formal and informal training.

My formal training has been focused on several courses related to children's literature. In these reading courses, the technicalities of finding age-appropriate, level-appropriate texts through the use of readability formulas and other tools have shown me the complexities we can reach if we are not careful. We must keep focused on the goal: children's ability to read any kind of text.

In the same manner, I have been blessed with the friendship of every librarian I have met. They have shared a wealth of information regarding the creme of the crop in the "ity, bity" literary world, and they are arduous advocates of any imaginable genre.

But, how do we get the papyrus tablet, the scroll, the volume that will inspire the next Shakespeare or the next Neruda? Or puzzle the next Newton? Or make the next Diego Rivera paint his surrounding with beauty, indignation and hope? I have a few tips to offer.

Let's listen to the children: According to Monet Yañes (age 8) the best books are those that present us with happy stories. Monet has reached a point in her development where she is able to articulate her likes and dislikes. Monet expresses her interests in a simple, yet profound manner. So, my first tip is to choose a book that matches the interests and needs of the child according to his or her age and personal preferences.

Another area of interest for children is the characters in the books. Monet's brother, R.C. (age 7), prefers books where the characters are silly and the plot is funny. Ariel Bauer (age 8) likes books that have strong characters. "I like books with good characters, they may get into trouble, but then they're able to get out of it." Tip Number 2 then, is to choose a book with characters that are credible.

Remember, good characters become unforgettable characters, whether they are people, animals, fairies or science fiction beings. Through powerful characterization, the author is able to portray endurable images. Who can forget Pinocchio, or Wilbur or Little Red Riding Hood? How many times are we reminded what can happen to our nose if we lie, how much a friend's rally means to us, or the dangers of taking the wrong path?

These characters are universal because the feelings and situations they face are universal. Children are able to perceive the universality of strong characters because they can identify with them. The reason Curious George is followed by legions of children across generations is that he embodies what is in everybody's mind at the age of six or seven. Children want to know what happens when you end up behind the scenes in a Pizzeria (I think many adults would like to know that too).

Alexander (of *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, Not Good, Very Bad Day*, by Judith Viorst) portrays the moods children experience when they are confronted with situations they do not like or that may cause some anxiety. For children, it is difficult to express what kinds of feelings they experience, and they find in characters such as Alexander a way to process their own feelings. Good books help children understand and express their own feelings. They nurture the child's emotional development.

Many children wonder about their surroundings and those of others. In *Tar Beach* by Faith Ringgold, a little girl spends summer nights on "Tar Beach," the rooftop of her 1939 New York City apartment building. Also, six-year-old Ahmed cannot wait to finish his job in the busy and terribly noisy streets of Cairo, Egypt, to run home and share a precious secret with the rest of his family in *The Day of Ahmed's Secret* by Florence Parry Heide. In addition, children are able to discover other writing systems in *The Great Wall of China* by Leonard Everett Fisher. These are three superb examples of literary treasures that provide children with a window to other worlds. Tip Number 3 is to select books that stimulate our intellect and creativity.

Quality literature stimulates a profound knowledge about our surroundings, in many instances it provides answers to critical questions.

Quality literature provides a concrete reference for abstract concepts. Ideas such as courage, freedom and even subtraction or multiplication are difficult for young children. Good books are a great way to help children visualize difficult abstract concepts.

Tip #1: Choose a book that matches the interests and needs of the child according to his or her age and personal preferences.

Tip #2: Choose a book with characters that are credible.

Tip #3: Select books that stimulate our intellect and creativity.

Tip #4: Look for books that are able to convey interesting stories that also can be extended to other areas of the curriculum.

Tip #5: Choose books with wonderful illustrations.

Tip #6: Choose books that you (the adult) are willing to "perform" for a child or a group of children.

Books like *The Doorbell Rang* by Hutchins and *A Chair for My Mother* by Vera Williams are an excellent way to introduce young students to mathematical concepts such as subtraction, division and counting money.

In the area of social studies, books like *The Malachite Palace* by Alma Flor Ada and *The Island of the Skogg* by Steven Kellogg introduce children to the elusive concepts of freedom, individual rights and democracy. Also, *Pelitos* by Sandra Cisneros and illustrated by Terry Ybañez gives children the opportunity to reflect on their family's heritage and be proud of it. Critical concepts

Read It Again! *– continued on page 4*

Read It Again! *- continued from page 4*

and human values are transmitted through the elegant text of quality literature. The fourth tip is to look for books that are able to convey interesting stories that also can be extended to other areas of the curriculum.

Many of us have picked up great children's books on the basis of their illustrations. These illustrations can come in different kinds or media. Chances are that if you like the pictures, children will too. Books like the *Piggy Book* by Anthony Brown provide in the illustrations opportunities for exploration for children. Check all the listings of Caldecott winners and you will find great examples of quality illustrated books. Tip Number 5 is to choose books with wonderful illustrations.

Expand the aesthetic sense of young children by guiding them to recognize the different ways illustrators are able to capture a mood or an idea through the use of color, texture or light.

Finally, the best book for children is one the adult is willing to share with them. For example, Johneric Hernandez (age 3) prefers any book that his grandma reads to him. He enjoys his grandma's reading performance. "I like the faces my grandma makes, the noises she makes." He sees the reading of a book as a precious time when he can capture his grandma's attention all for himself. My final tip is to choose books that you (the adult) are willing to "perform" for a child or a group of children.

This simple encounter with the world of theater takes children to the magical dimension of fantasy and imagination. This realm will be revisited at a later age when children are introduced to pictureless books, and they need to visualize in order to understand.

Reading aloud to 3- and 4-year-olds provides the foundation for the critical skill of being able to visualize a concept without pictures.

Finally, remember that some books produced in countries other than the United States provide a great resource for authentic literature in the native language. However, some are printed in cursive writing that can prove difficult for young readers. Others may contain variations of the language that may be incomprehensible or inappropriate within the U.S. context. Always consider your students' or your children's background before choosing a book. If you are introducing them to a new culture or a new concept, make sure you spend some time in that introduction.

Remember: We all want to choose books that will elicit the phrase, "Read it again!"

Resources

Donavin, D.P. (Ed.). *American Library Association Best of the Best for Children* (New York: Random House, 1992).

IBBY Mexico/SITESA. *Leer De La Mano,*

Read It Again! *- continued on page 8*

HIGHLIGHTS OF RECENT IDRA ACTIVITIES

In February, IDRA worked with **7,322** teachers, administrators and parents through **85** training and technical assistance activities and **160** program sites in **12** states plus the United Kingdom. Topics included:

- Technology for All Students
- Comprehensive Centers *Reading Success Network*
- Establishing a Parent Network to Support Dual Language Programs
- What do I do with Non-English Speakers?
- San Antonio *Community Education Leadership Program*

Activity Snapshot

As a result of the Office for Civil Rights' finding of discrimination against language-minority students, the IDRA *South Central Collaborative for Equity* assisted a New Mexico school district to create and implement a correction plan. The center provided training and technical assistance to campus administrators and bilingual education and English as a second language (ESL) teachers. The training included strategies for including ESL in the classroom, offering appropriate assessment of language-minority students and validating the students' culture in the classroom. The South Central Collaborative for Equity (formerly called the Desegregation Assistance Center) is the equity assistance center that serves Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas.

Participating agencies and school districts included:

- Arkansas State Department of Education
- Ft. Worth Independent School District (ISD), Texas
- Cobre Consolidated School District, New Mexico
- Los Angeles County Office of Education, California
- Midland ISD, Texas

Regularly, IDRA staff provides services to:

- public school teachers
- parents
- administrators
- other decision makers in public education

Services include:

- training and technical assistance
- evaluation
- serving as expert witnesses in policy settings and court cases
- publishing research and professional papers, books, videos and curricula

For information on IDRA services for your school district or other group, contact IDRA at 210/684-8180.

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What Really Matters in American Education

Richard W. Riley, U.S. Secretary of Education

If you gave the American people a choice today between using federal dollars to renovate and build new public schools or using public tax dollars to pay for private school vouchers, there would be no question how the American people would vote.

It could cost roughly $15 billion just to pay the tuition of the 5 million children already enrolled in private schools in this nation. The last thing we should be doing at a time when so many of our schools are bursting at their seams is to be draining public tax dollars from public education to subsidize private education....

Vouchers are wrong for many reasons and we need to be clear about what is at stake. Vouchers undermine a 200 year American commitment to the common school – a commitment that has helped America keep faith with our democratic ideals and become a beacon of light for people all over the world.

Let's remember that public education has always been and continues to be the open door to American success and good citizenship – the American way to achievement and freedom. Vouchers would begin the unraveling of this uniquely American fabric – the common public school that is open to all and gives everyone a fair chance to succeed.

Every state in this nation provides for a free, public education and a great majority of them have written this idea into their state constitution. The ideal that every child in this country has a constitutional right to a free, public education is not to be dismissed lightly....

The background paper we are releasing today notes that vouchers would reduce public accountability and make private schools less private and less independent – and make parochial schools less parochial.

There is little certainty that religious schools that now make up 79 percent of all private schools would be willing to give up their religious mission in order to overcome constitutional barriers. The paper also notes that private schools simply do not have the capacity to absorb additional students, much less those children with special disabilities.

I worry, too, that those who support vouchers have become almost myopic in their insistence that public education is failing across-the-board. Tell that to the parents ... in countless school districts across the country where parents and community leaders support public education.

Two years ago, *Money* magazine did a survey of the top 100 school districts in the country. The survey found out that the two defining factors that led to the creation of what *Money* magazine called "super schools" were community and family involvement, not income or family status. Vouchers, on the other hand, divide communities.

The background paper also provides research evidence – and this is very important – that the most important choice students can make is not the type of school they go to – public or private – but the academic courses they take.

This is the first choice that parents should be making – making sure their children take the tough academic courses like algebra, geometry, chemistry and other core courses. This is why I am always perplexed that voucher advocates almost never talk about how to improve reading, how to improve teaching, how to raise academic standards or how to fix crumbling schools.

Their solution for every issue that confronts American education is vouchers. It is a very simplistic world view – a silver bullet solution – and it is just dead wrong. If a school is failing, the solution isn't to give scholarships to 50 children and leave 500 behind, but to fix the whole school....

Does public education need to be improved? Of course it does, and there is a consensus about how it can be done. Public tax dollars ought to be spent to improve reading and math, to improve the skills of America's teachers, to get computers into the classroom, to renovate and build new schools – to make sure that high school diplomas really mean something.

I believe that if we focus in on what we agree on and what really matters rather than on what divides us – we can make the next 10 years the "golden era" of American education. The American people have made the improvement of public education a national priority. We know how to fix our schools. Now is the time to roll-up our sleeves and get it done.

Excerpted from September 23, 1997, remarks of Secretary of Education Richard Riley at the National Press Club. The background paper he refers to is, "What Really Matters in American Education," that was released on the same day. The report is available on line at www.ed.gov.

OH SURE, WE COULD SPEND MILLIONS AND FIX IT UP... OR, WE CAN SLAP SOME BARS ON THOSE WINDOWS AND PRESTO – WE GOT OURSELVES A NEW PRISON!

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Day One Video Conference Sites

- Options in Education High School in McAllen, Texas
- Greenwich Education Business Partnership, Greenwich, England (Abbey Wood School, Eagles Field School, Crown Woods School, Plumstead Manor Girls School, Kidbrook School)
- Kazen Middle School, San Antonio
- Kennedy Middle School in Atlanta (host site)

Day Two Video Conference Sites

- East Birmingham College and Wake Green Center in Birmingham, England
- South San Antonio High School in San Antonio
- Stell Middle School in Brownsville, Texas
- Benito Juarez High School, Chicago (host site)

Day Three Video Conference Sites

- César Chávez Middle School in La Joya, Texas
- Sheldon Heath and St. Albans Schools in Birmingham, England
- Besteiro Middle School in Brownsville, Texas
- H. P. Carter Career Center, Houston (host site)

Video Conferencing – *continued from page 2*

and López-De La Garza, 1998). The video conferences also provide an experience of feeling special and of being acknowledged and recognized.

Since the tutors have much in common related to their tutoring, they also have much in common in terms of their lives. Actually, they are more alike than different across the country and across the ocean.

Many of the tutors do not start off with great test scores and grades. But most improve within a short period of time and are able to do work that was never expected of them by teachers.

Many tutors start the program with a poor self-concept. Then they are praised by the teachers and principals in the elementary schools because they are making the younger children smile, listen, learn and feel good about themselves too.

Many tutors start the program with poor language abilities. But they certainly do a tremendous job of teaching their tutees to do things their classroom teachers have not been successful with – even teaching reading and writing.

Many tutors start the program having financial difficulties and needing to have a job to help make ends meet. But now they are able to take pride in the fact that they are contributing to the household finances. They also take pride in being able to contribute small gifts to their tutees.

Many tutors start the program being considered at risk of dropping out or as disaffected youth. But they have a great sense of survival. (Anyone who has faced hardships, has had a poor self-concept for years and has been faced time and time again with those subtle and open expressions of low expectations has had to develop some mechanism to survive and hopefully overcome.)

Through the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, the school captures the entire student. It finds those great qualities that we all have and uses them to facilitate the students' contributing to themselves, the school and the community. Those qualities come out whether the community is in south Texas, Chicago or Great Britain. After all, "every child is valuable, none is expendable."

Resources

Cantu, L. and L. López-De La Garza. "Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program Students Meet Peers Via Video Conference," *IDRA Newsletter* (San Antonio: Intercultural Development Research Association, August 1998).

Rogelio López del Bosque, Ed.D., is the coordinator for professional development in the IDRA Division of Professional Development. Comments and questions may be sent to him via e-mail at contact@idra.org.

Facts about the IDRA Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program

- *The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program is currently in more than 159 schools in 18 cities across the United States (California, New Mexico, Washington, D.C., Illinois and Texas) Puerto Rico, Great Britain and Brazil.*
- *The program has maintained a less than 2 percent dropout rate for its participants for the last decade.*
- *In the 1996-97 school year, less than 1.2 percent of Valued Youth tutors dropped out of school that year, compared to a 29.4 percent dropout rate for U.S. Hispanic students and a 11 percent national dropout rate.*
- *In a four year tracking study of one school district in Texas, where the program is in place, 100 percent of the Valued Youth tutors graduated from high school, and 77.3 percent went on to college or technical school – compared to less than 8 percent of the U.S. Hispanic student population who entered higher education during that time.*
- *In several San Antonio independent school districts, the dropout rate among participants fell from 50 percent to 2 percent since the program was introduced.*

The Anti-Social Promotion Bandwagon: Riding Down the Campaign Trail

Pam McCollum, Ph.D.

Politicians nationwide are jumping on the "end social promotion" bandwagon to emphasize their determination to raise educational standards. Unfortunately, they fail to acknowledge the ill-effects – both academic and social – to students who are required to repeat an entire year of schooling (Shepard and Smith, 1989).

Over a year ago, Texas Governor Bush announced that the practice of social promotion would no longer be tolerated in Texas. He denounced passing students who had not mastered all of the required curriculum on to the next grade and made the eradication of social promotion the centerpiece of his campaign.

The governor's anti-social promotion position was crafted into Senate Bill 1 by Senator Teel Bivins (D-Amarillo). The bill emphasizes early detection of reading problems, beginning in kindergarten, with intensive reading instruction for low performing students. It is essentially a "promotional gates" program, which retains third, fifth and eighth grade students in-grade if they do not perform at acceptable levels.

If Senate Bill 1 is passed into law, students entering kindergarten in the fall of 1999 will have their reading development evaluated through reading inventories in kindergarten, first grade and second grade. Students who perform below expected levels will receive intensive reading instruction from teachers trained in intensive reading instruction. The bill sets aside $200 million to fund the program, which will pay teachers a $150 stipend to receive the training.

Beginning in the 2002-03 school year, third graders will be required to pass the reading and math sections of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) with a score of 70 or above to be promoted. Students who fail will get two more opportunities to pass the TAAS after attending mandatory summer school. In its original form, Senate Bill 1 called for retaining students in-grade after a third failed attempt at passing the TAAS. In its present form, the bill provides for the exercise of local options through the action of a "grade placement committee" whose charge is to decide grade placement on an individual basis. In eighth grade, students will be required to score at acceptable levels on the TAAS tests in reading, math and writing.

After hearing testimony from educational administrators, business leaders and professional organizations, the Senate education committee passed Senate Bill 1 with a vote of 8 ayes, 0 nays and 1 abstention. Only IDRA and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) presented testimony attesting to the negative consequences of retaining students, primarily minorities, in grade and its potential for contributing to the already alarming dropout rate among minority youth.

Senator Royce West (D-Dallas) was the only committee member to voice concerns over the bill. He stated the level of funding was insufficient to adequately fund the effort and questioned whether specially trained teachers would be available in minority neighborhoods, precisely those that will be most affected if the bill is passed into law.

The bill was passed by the senate with a unanimous vote on February 18, 1999. It is now being considered by the House of Representatives where Representative Paul Sadler, the chair of the House education committee, is taking a more studied approach to the issues in the bill. He said he is not sure retention is in students' best interest, and he is exploring other options such as smaller class size and early intervention as strategies to improve student achievement. He and other committee members also question whether or not it is advisable to pass this type of educational policy into law without considering its long-term effects once the heat of campaign rhetoric and promises have ended. The House of Representatives must vote on Senate Bill 1 by May 22, 1999. So far, a vote has not been scheduled.

IDRA released a policy brief in March finding that 50 percent of students who

Anti-Social Promotion – continued on page 8

Did you know?

The cost of retentions in grade in Texas totaled more than $2.48 billion from 1993-94 to 1996-97.

Cost of Retentions In-Grade in Texas

School Year	Total* Retentions	Operating Expenditures Per Pupil	Estimated State and Local Costs
1993-94	125,959	$4,294	$540,867,946
1994-95	128,369	$4,360	$559,688,840
1995-96	144,683	$4,756	$688,112,348
1996-97	147,202	$4,717	$694,351,834
Total	546,213		$2,483,020,968

**Source: Report on Grade Level Retention of Texas Students 1996-97 (Austin, Texas: Texas Education Agency, 1998)*

Failing Our Children – Finding Alternatives to In-grade Retention (IDRA, 1999)

Anti-Social Promotion – *continued from page 7*

repeat a grade do no better the second time, and 25 percent actually do worse (McCollum, Cortez, Montes and Maroney, 1999). The research on the ineffectiveness of retention is very clear. The effects of retention are harmful, reports *Failing Our Children – Finding Alternatives to In-Grade Retention*. The brief presents an in-depth look at the issue of in-grade retention (particularly in Texas), reviews research that finds this practice to be ineffective, and outlines alternatives to both retention and social promotion. Key findings include:

- Retention is strongly associated with dropping out of school in later years. A second retention makes dropping out a virtual certainty.
- The cost of retaining students in Texas in 1996-97 was $694 million.
- During 1993 to 1997, retention rates in Texas have steadily risen. In the 1996-97 school year, 147,202 students were retained in grade.
- Retention rates in Texas for Hispanic students and African American students are over two and a half times higher than the rates of White students.

The policy brief was released as the Texas legislature first considered proposals that would further increase rates of retention. The brief was developed by the IDRA Institute for Policy and Leadership as part of a series on four key issues in education designed to inform community and policy decisions during the Texas legislative session and beyond. Two of the other policy briefs in the series (*Missing: Texas Youth – Dropout and Attrition Rates in Texas Public High Schools* and *Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs in Texas – What is Known; What is Needed*) were released in February. The fourth (on the use of public money for private schooling) will be released soon.

Resources

Shepard, L.S. and M.L. Smith (Eds.) *Flunking Grades: Research and Policies on Retention* (New York: The Falmer Press, 1989).

McCollum, P. and A. Cortez, F. Montes and O.H. Maroney. *Failing Our Children – Finding Alternatives to In-Grade Retention* (San Antonio: Intercultural Development Research Association, 1999).

Pam McCollum, Ph.D., is a senior education associate in the IDRA Division of Professional Development. Comments and questions may be sent to her via e-mail at contact@idra.org.

"Failing Our Children – Finding Alternatives to In-Grade Retention" and the other released policy briefs are on line at www.idra.org. Copies are available for $7 each.

Read It Again! – *continued from page 4*

Cómo y Qué Leerles a los Que Empiezan a Leer (México, D.F.: Asociación Mexicana Para el Fomento Del Libro Infantil Y Juvenil A.C. Cuadernos I y II, Sistemas Técnicos de Edición, 1993).

Wilson, E. *Books Children Love: A Guide to the Best Children's Literature* (Westchester, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1992).

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Legislature Grapples with Reform Issues: A Texas Policy Update

Albert Cortez, Ph.D.

Inside this Issue:

- New network of parents
- Two-way bilingual education
- The voucher debate
- Characteristics of safe schools

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

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As the Texas legislature heads into the last days of its 120-day biennial session, many of the major issues remain on the table.

After hours of public testimony, hundreds of pages of texts, and countless hours of committee and individual deliberations, no major legislation has yet to make it all the way through the policy formation process.

Social Promotion and Retention in Grade

The session opened with Governor George W. Bush unveiling a proposal touted to eliminate social promotion in Texas schools, coupled with an ambitious proposal to improve reading achievement in early grades. The proposal's primary alternative to social promotion however was in-grade retention. The plan was quickly adopted in the Senate with a rare unanimous vote. But the proposal encountered more strenuous examination in the House of Representatives.

Last February, the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) released a policy brief on the ineffectiveness of in-grade retention (McCollum, et al., 1999). Key findings of *Failing Our Children – Finding Alternatives to In-Grade Retention** include:

- Retention is **strongly associated with dropping out** of school in later years. A second retention makes dropping out a virtual certainty.
- The cost of retaining students in Texas in 1996-97 was **$694 million**.
- **During 1993 to 1997, retention rates in Texas have steadily risen.**
- Retention rates in Texas for Hispanic students and African American students are **over two and a half times higher** than the rates of White students.

Given these and other concerns, the House education committee shifted their focus away from retention and high stakes assessment for young children. They focused instead on whether smaller class sizes, better prepared early childhood teachers, and/or state mandated and subsidized full-day early childhood/pre-kindergarten/kindergarten programs would produce the desired outcomes.

The widely diverging perspectives created something of an impasse. Given the importance of the social promotion issue in the context of upcoming political races, some type of compromise on the issue of early childhood programs, high stakes testing and in-grade retention may result. But no one in Austin is laying odds on the resolution of this issue.

School Dropouts

IDRA released data at a meeting of the State Board of Education in January indicating that more than **1.2 million students have been lost from Texas public schools** to attrition from 1985-86 to 1997-98. In that time, the state of Texas lost **$319 billion** in foregone income, lost tax revenues and increased criminal justice, welfare, unemployment and job training costs. The data is summarized in IDRA's policy brief, *Missing: Texas Youth – Dropout and Attrition Rates in Texas Public High Schools** (Supik and Johnson, 1999).

Legislature Grapples – continued on page 2

Legislature Grapples – *continued from page 1*

It is presented against a backdrop of the 1986 legislation that mandated schools and the Texas Education Agency (TEA) ensure that at least 95 percent of Texas' youth receive their high school diplomas. The latest findings include:

- **Two out of every five students** (42 percent) enrolled in the ninth grade during the 1994-95 school year failed to reach and/or complete the 12th grade in 1997-98.
- **More than 100,000 Texas youth did not receive their high school diplomas last year, yet they were not counted as dropouts.**

These numbers are in stark contrast to those calculated by TEA that show the state's dropout rates improving. This is due, in part, to the state's loose interpretation of the dropout definition, counting and reporting methods.

In response to these concerns with the accuracy and integrity of Texas school district dropout reporting, Senator Gonzalo Barrientos introduced SB 1561 to improve the manner in which dropouts are defined and the procedures used to calculate annual and longitudinal dropout rates in Texas.

The Texas Attorney General's office has also raised concerns with this issue. Coupled with the Sen. Barrientos' own research (that revealed wide discrepancies between state-reported dropout rates and alternative estimates of actual numbers of school leavers), the need for major revisions of state policies has become obvious to many.

> **"It is also evidence that – although Texas is being lauded as a leader in school reform and improvement, outperforming many comparable states on measures of progress and/or student achievement – state level data indicates that Texas still has far to go before it is truly a place where equal educational opportunity exists for all pupils."**

At this writing, the Texas Senate has adopted major changes to the school district and state level dropout definition, annual and longitudinal dropout rate calculation, and dropout reporting requirements. Among the changes being proposed are the calculation of annual *and longitudinal* dropout rates involving the tracking of cohorts of pupils. The proposal also restricts the types of students who can be considered as non-dropouts (e.g., students who pass all courses but not all portions of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills [TAAS] and thus are denied a high school diploma). The proposal expands requirements for schools to document the status of students who have left their school campuses. The measure also includes provisions to provide financial awards to districts that reflect the greatest decreases in their dropout rates.

House action of the legislation is still pending, however given growing public awareness and concern with accuracy of school dropout counts in Texas schools, the adoption of some reform is likely.

School Funding

The Texas legislature also has grappled with school budget concerns. A major issue involves the amount of the state contribution to the teacher retirement system. The state is faced with an aging teaching force and understandable concerns about the adequacy of funding provided to retiring educational personnel working in Texas public schools. State leaders were proposing to increase the amount of state funding by about $1 billion. While the actual appropriation may well turn out to be less than this, a bi-partisan consensus about the need to increase state participation in the teacher retirement system may lead to some state funding increase in this area.

In addition, some state leaders are proposing to increase the state prescribed level for minimum teacher salaries. While the goal of some proponents at one time was as high as $6,000 per teacher, recent reports estimate that the average salary increase will be closer to $3,000. In contrast to other years, educator salaries and benefits top the priority list for many state lawmakers.

Legislature Grapples – *continued on page 10*

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The Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) is a non-profit organization with a 501(c)(3) tax exempt status. The purpose of the organization is to disseminate information concerning equality of educational opportunity.

The *IDRA Newsletter* (ISSN 1069-5672, © 1999) serves as a vehicle for communication with educators, school board members, decision-makers, parents, and the general public concerning the educational needs of all children in Texas and across the United States.

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IDRA South Central Collaborative for Equity

Two-way Bilingual Programs:

The Demand for a Multilingual Workforce

Anna Alicia Romero

Our world is becoming a single global community, a community where technology, commerce and immigration have facilitated our exposure to other cultures and languages. Thus, our challenge is to equip future generations with the competencies necessary for multilingual workforce demands.

Our Nation's Challenge

Children speaking little or no English have traditionally been viewed as burdens to the education system, requiring additional staffing, funding and materials as well as dealing with federal and state compliance standards. But the demands of a global economy are beginning to challenge public schools to produce the workforce necessary for this country to lead and not trail behind other countries where multilingualism is accepted and expected.

It is, therefore, ironic that poor, immigrant children are being viewed as a tool to prepare English-dominant children for the demands of the information age. At one time, and still in many communities around the country, the objective was to totally immerse children in the English language quickly so they could assimilate into the dominant society. Total immersion has not yielded many positive results in student achievement or in gaining workforce skills.

Now, these very children are seen as assets to the classroom, providing new language and cultural experiences for their classmates. Non-English speaking and English-dominant students are being enriched by this new classroom setting.

How Can We Face the Challenge?

Bilingual education teaches English to children and gives them a chance to practice it while they also learn subjects like math and science. Children do not have to waste time in class or wait until they learn English well to begin learning about numbers or about what plants need in order to grow.

Bilingual education is one of the many ways for schools to increase skills and competency levels among the new generation of the U.S. workforce to benefit everyone.

In two-way developmental bilingual education, English speakers and language-minority students are in the same classroom learning all grade level skills in each other's languages. Studies show that two-way programs are the most successful program models for language minority students, as well as for native English speakers.

Two-way bilingual programs, especially in the elementary years, are being used as a way to prepare our children for a different world, one that is not nationalistic or looks only to one language for trade. The school program blends English-speaking students with non-English-speaking students. It provides instruction in both English and a second language, while valuing what each child has to contribute to the learning process.

Two-way bilingual programs around the United States are offered in different languages, depending on the concentration of students in the area speaking another language that is not English. These include Spanish, Cantonese, Korean, Navajo, Japanese and Russian. The overwhelming majority of the programs are conducted in Spanish and English (Christian, 1994). Two states, New York and California, with high populations of immigrant, non-English speaking or limited-English-proficient students, have the greatest number of two-way bilingual programs. But other states are also interested in the potential benefits of students being fluent in two languages.

Who Benefits?

Who reaps the benefits of being biliterate and bilingual? For Hispanic students, being biliterate and bilingual means they will tend to have higher income levels – earning approximately $2,000 more per year than Hispanic adults who speak only English or Spanish (Fern, 1998).

In Florida, business and education sectors have teamed together to study the economic impact of the increasing language-minority populations within the state and how those populations can be used to the state's economic advantage. Two-way bilingual programs are being viewed as a way to nurture an environment where multiple languages are valued and maintained and how this can be a lure for foreign business interests to invest and set up shop in Florida. In the end, the entire nation stands to gain.

What Makes a Quality Program?

According to the Center for Applied Linguistics, a successful two-way bilingual program must contain the following characteristics in order to be successful (Christian, 1994):

- The program should provide at least four to six years of bilingual instruction to students participating in the program.
- Students in the program should have the same core academic curriculum as students in other programs.
- Students should receive optimal language input (sufficient amount of input that is comprehensible and interesting) and output. This includes quality language arts instruction in both languages.
- At least 50 percent of the class time should be dedicated to the non-English language for instruction. In the early grades, a maximum of 90 percent can be used. Instructional time in English should be used a minimum of 10 percent.
- The learning environment in the program should be conducive to students learning a second language "while continuing to develop their native language proficiency."
- The classroom should be balanced with both English and non-English speaking students along with interactive learning activities.
- Students need opportunities for positive interaction with each other. Cooperative learning activities can be a tool for facilitating such interactions.
- Teachers should integrate best practices from other two-way bilingual programs, such as use of qualified staff and strong connections with parents.

Why Should Parents be Vigilant?

Access to quality bilingual programs has traditionally been a struggle for language

Two-way Bilingual – continued on page [illegible]

Parents Organizing Bilingual Education Advocates:

Parent Institutes as a Strategy

Aurelio M. Montemayor, M.Ed.

A new national network of parents was formed at the National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) 1999 conference held in January in Denver. Numerous parent leaders from across the country convened to protect and improve bilingual education for their children. Excitement and dialogue continued throughout the highly participatory sessions held as part of the parent institute.

At the closing meeting, participants agreed to form a coalition of individuals and organizations. The current, operational name of the group is "National Coalition of Parents for Bilingual Education (*Coalición nacional de padres en pro la educación bilingüe*)." The NABE board agreed to support this parent network for bilingual education.

The young organization is a natural and expected culmination of many diverse efforts by parents and supporters of parent leadership to publicly support excellent bilingual education for all children. In recent years, there has been increased participation by parents at local, state and national conferences. Bilingual advocacy organizations have increased their support for parent involvement.

Last year at NABE '98 in Dallas, hundreds of parents from across the country convened in a parent institute that focused on two-way bilingual education, high standards in school and leadership. Last fall at the Texas Association for Bilingual Education (TABE) conference held in San Antonio, parents from all parts of Texas again focused on leadership in a parent institute. Similar events have occurred in California and other regions.

The institute in Denver succeeded because of the persistence of key individuals and groups: Rudy Chavez and Kevin King of the BUENO Center for Multicultural Education of the University of Colorado – Boulder (Mr. Chavez served as the overall local conference committee co-chair); Guillermo Serna, a parent from Colorado and strong voice on the NABE executive board; David Portillo and the parents of *Padres Unidos* in Denver; Richard Garcia and Rebecca Orona, of the Colorado Statewide Parent Coalition; and Anna Alicia Romero from the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) in San Antonio.

Parent institutes have proven to be effective for several reasons beyond the obvious learning, leadership development and networking. When an institute is held in conjunction with an educator event, parents and educators can collaborate and learn from each other outside the school setting. Several lessons were learned and reaffirmed at the NABE parent institute in Denver. They include the following.

- Local and state efforts are what really bring such institutes together.
- The participation of parents from all parts of the country gives the institute its power and breadth.
- Parents want to be leaders and have much to say about education.
- Parents are most powerfully engaged when they are asked key, critical questions and are allowed time to respond and dialogue.
- Parent institutes need an ongoing participatory strand for parents by parents that is focused on advocacy, leadership development and networking.
- Concurrent sessions that are popular but have parents as passive receivers of information and sessions that are focused on parenting skills should not detract from or compete with the advocacy and leadership development focus.
- Local and regional problems can distract parents from forming coalitions and developing concrete plans of action for parent recruitment and leadership development.
- NABE can and will support parent leadership for bilingual education.

Challenges to the bilingual education advocacy community include determining the following:

- How to channel the resources of bilingual education advocacy groups and associations in the country to support parent leadership and parent coalition building.
- How educators can take concrete action to support parent involvement and leadership – including getting significant numbers of parents – to meetings and conferences.
- How bilingual advocacy groups can develop ways to have strong, vibrant numbers of parents as members without membership fees and conference registration costs being a restraining force.

Parents Organizing – continued on page 5

Lessons Learned, Lessons Shared:
Texas Immigrant Education Collaborative
by Pam McCollum, Ph.D.

This publication fills a void by showing educators what is necessary to develop and maintain appropriate programs for secondary level recent immigrant students. This monograph shares the lessons learned from participation in IDRA's Texas Immigrant Education Collaborative (TIEC) project in two sites – a middle school in Houston, Texas with an international immigrant student population, and a border high school in El Paso, Texas, with a primarily homogenous Mexican immigrant population. The TIEC was funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. *Lessons Learned, Lessons Shared* provides information on immigrant education concerning legal issues, effective instructional programs, and educational resources – including Internet listings – for this unique group of students. (ISBN 1-878550-66-7; 53 pages; 1998; $24.95 each)

To order, send a check or purchase order to: IDRA, 5835 Callaghan Road, Suite 350, San Antonio, Texas 78228-1190; phone 210/684-8180; fax 210/684-5389; e-mail: contact@idra.org; URL: http://www.idra.org

Parents Organizing – *continued from page 4*

- How bilingual advocates can support creating a strong local, state and national coalition of parents who are pro-bilingual education while at the same time not draining the financial resources these organizations need for advocacy.
- How to shift the focus of conferences as showplaces and marketing opportunities for individuals and groups and move toward the desperately needed focus on advocacy, organizing and moving bilingual education from a politically beleaguered battle to a triumphant, universally accepted offering that most families will demand for their children in all schools.
- How to shift the view of parent involvement
  - *from* a deficit model (though usually innocently seen as benign) that assumes that parents (or certain types of parents) are not good enough as parents, teachers, etc., and therefore need to be fixed, cured, improved or otherwise changed to the correct model envisioned by educators and others,
  - *to* the valuing model that recognizes parents as intelligent, ready to act in their children's defense and just needing the opportunity to be heard and to connect to like-minded parents and others to take action.
- How to shift the view of parent representation
  - *from* one individual selected to participate arbitrarily on the basis of charm, personality or acquiescence,
  - *to* support for leadership teams – groups of parents supporting each other in revolving leadership and encouraging others to be leaders.

There are many challenges, but there are also fabulous opportunities. Our current struggle with bilingual education foes is just the 1999 version of a larger ongoing struggle. Each action in defense of bilingual education is also an opportunity to listen deeply to parents and their needs, wants and desires for their children.

Many parents whose first language is not English continue to struggle for the economic, social and spiritual well-being of their families. These efforts spring from a profound commitment, strength, tenacity, intelligence and all those other qualities that are fed by love for their children. Our biggest challenge is to help all parents channel some of that awesome strength and those marvelous energies to create a strong bilingual voice for all children. Parents and families deserve our organizational support to organize themselves to save, protect and improve not just bilingual education but our total public school system.

Aurelio Montemayor, M.Ed., is the lead trainer in the IDRA Division of Professional Development. Comments and questions may be sent to him via e-mail at contact@idra.org.

To join or support the National Coalition of Parents for Bilingual Education contact the initial conveners:

- *David Portillo, director, Centro de Padres Unidos (2009 West 33rd Avenue, Denver, Colorado 80211; phone 303-458-6545, fax 303-458-5635; padres5@dnvr.uswest.net).*
- *Anna Alicia Romero, education assistant, and Aurelio Montemayor, lead trainer, IDRA (5835 Callaghan Road, Suite 350, San Antonio, Texas 78228; phone 210-684-8180; fax 210-684-5389; contact@idra.org).*

HIGHLIGHTS OF RECENT IDRA ACTIVITIES

In March, IDRA worked with **15,396** teachers, administrators and parents through **89** training and technical assistance activities and **160** program sites in **10** states plus the United Kingdom and Brazil. Topics included:

- ◆ Strengthening the Connection: Home School and Community – Parent Leadership
- ◆ Meeting the Needs of a Multicultural Student Population
- ◆ Behavior Management with Children
- ◆ *IDRA Project FLAIR (Focusing on Language and Academic Instructional Renewal)*

Activity Snapshot

In collaboration with the Edgewood Independent School District, IDRA is conducting a field-initiated research project as part of its current Title VII *Content Area Program Enhancement* (CAPE) project. CAPE is a teaching training program based on the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) which focuses on teaching learning strategies in cooperative settings to speed the acquisition of language skills and academic content. The training is designed to serve limited-English-proficient (LEP) students at the intermediate level. The research project is assessing the degree to which classrooms participating in CAPE provide more appropriate instruction for LEP students than other classrooms. After all the data is collected and analyzed, IDRA will develop a monograph on the lessons learned in the project that can be used by other teachers and school personnel.

Participating agencies and school districts included:

- ◇ Jefferson Parish Public Schools, Louisiana
- ◇ Edgewood Independent School District (ISD), Texas
- ◇ Texas Education Service Center, Region XI

Regularly, IDRA staff provides services to:

- ◆ public school teachers
- ◆ parents
- ◆ administrators
- ◆ other decision makers in public education

Services include:

- ◇ training and technical assistance
- ◇ evaluation
- ◇ serving as expert witnesses in policy settings and court cases
- ◇ publishing research and professional papers, books, videos and curricula

For information on IDRA services for your school district or other group, contact IDRA at 210/684-8180.

Origins of Public Education and the Voucher Debate

Albert Cortez, Ph.D.

Public education in the United States evolved differently than public school systems in other countries. Education in many nations was limited to those with money, involved subsidized public schools at minimal levels, or evolved as meritocracies where only the most able students were afforded educational opportunities above a minimal literacy level.

The United States experienced the evolution of a very different tradition where *universal, publicly-funded education* came to be considered as the foundation for creating and sustaining a democratic society. If all members of the society were to participate in the democratic process, related to self governance, literacy and basic education were essential characteristics to be universally nurtured in the people.

Education was left as a primary responsibility of the states, and most states incorporated those responsibilities in their state constitutions. Thus, education in this country evolved not as an individual responsibility, but one reserved for state governments.

Over time, states decentralized these responsibilities by delegating some authority to local communities. An underlying assumption of community- and neighborhood-based schools was that the opportunity for students and families to interact and converge in a public forum would strengthen the social fabric.

This sharing of a common experience among diverse pupils, coupled with a community-wide ownership of these institutions, was seen as reinforcing our basic concepts of equality and the importance of nurturing opportunities for advancement by providing universal education for all in a common setting. It also nurtured the concept of civic responsibility when state and community resources were pooled for the greater good of all.

Vouchers, in turn, represent a radical departure from these democratic traditions. Rather than being concerned with principals of democracy and educational opportunity, they are based on assumptions of individual benefit, profit and economic theory.

The Purpose of Vouchers

Key voucher proponents have stated that their ultimate objective is to eventually reallocate public tax monies from existing neighborhood schools to private, non-public educational providers (Nazareno and Cisneros-Lunsford, 1998). At the national level, the originators of the voucher idea never perceived it as a simple experiment to encourage public schools to improve. In their eyes, vouchers were a fundamental shift in the ways that public education was funded and a means of totally restructuring how education was organized and supported throughout the country.

In contrast to the century-old concept of a neighborhood institution where members of all levels of a community pooled their resources and came together to subsidize the education of local youth, original voucher proponents would change the focus from funding neighborhood schools to providing funds for individuals to "shop" for education wherever they desired.

At the core of the voucher idea, originally, was the notion that education should be converted to a free enterprise effort, like a business. As businesses, educational institutions would be forced to compete for clients. Those who competed unsuccessfully would fold up and disappear as do unsuccessful businesses. Schools could set up anywhere and use whatever means necessary to attract potential customers.

Among voucher proponents there was no concern with public accountability or the impact of diverting already limited resources from students who remain in the public school system. They believed that customer satisfaction with products would be the ultimate accountability.

Likewise, there was no thought given to equity or student accessibility issues. If some schools that accept vouchers required parents to pay money over and above the voucher-funded levels, that was OK. If some students could not afford to pay for those extra costs, they could go to cheaper, lower quality providers.

Similarly, voucher proponents were not concerned about whether vouchers – and voucher supported pupils – would be accepted by all schools. In fact, as business persons, they would say schools should have the prerogative to serve (or refuse to serve) whomever they chose.

The notion that vouchers would expand opportunities for low-income families and provide incentives for public schools to

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SINCE YOU'RE REALLY JUST A BIT RUN DOWN, I'D RECOMMEND A PROTEIN-RICH DIET, MULTI-VITAMINS AND AN IRON SUPPLEMENT- OF COURSE, NOT EVERYONE SHARES THAT VIEW-
BLEED 'IM! BLEED 'IM DRY!
BEN SARGENT

Reprinted with permission from Ben Sargent of the *Austin American-Statesman*.

Students for Sale –
The Use of Public Money for Private Schooling (An Excerpt)

So much of what happens in our neighborhoods revolves around the local public school. It is where we send our children each weekday morning. This is where children gather after school for scouting, sports and other activities. It is where adults go to vote and to be a part of community events, town hall meetings and other forums. Relocating families and business owners consider the neighborhood schools and their perceived quality before choosing a location.

In recent years, a handful of special interest groups have tried to shift the country away from this promise. These groups present various compelling – sometimes contradictory – rationales, but their bottom-line goal is the same: to take public money from public schools and divert it to private schools. With their high profile personalities and deep pockets, these groups have managed to lead some state policy makers and concerned individuals to believe there is strong public support for such a radical change. They are mistaken. Voters have repeatedly opposed proposals to support private and religious schools with tax money.

Recommendations

- Public tax revenues should be used solely for support of public schools.
- Public policy should support and sustain the concept that investment in neighborhood public schools is investment in communities.
- *All* students should have access to community-based, equitably-funded, high quality public schools.
- Schools that receive state tax monies should be subject to the same admissions and reporting requirements applicable to public schools.
- All publicly-funded education should strictly adhere to constitutional requirements related to separation of church and state.
- All publicly-funded education systems must be accountable to publicly-elected citizens from the community that they serve.

Findings at a Glance

- State courts have been inconsistent in rulings regarding the constitutionality of using public monies to support private schooling. U.S. Supreme Court rulings have required strict criteria to ensure that public funds do not subsidize religious instruction.
- Diverting public money for private schools takes money away from communities, resulting in higher taxes for homeowners and businesses in the community.
- Private schools are not accountable to the public for their actions or results.
  - ✔ Most private schools do not support public application, reporting and accountability requirements that are applicable to local public schools.
  - ✔ Though often initially limited to nonreligious schools, religiously affiliated schools are eventually included in voucher programs.
  - ✔ Voucher programs tend to attract the most academically successful students, students whose families have higher levels of education and those whose parents are most actively involved.
  - ✔ There is little evidence that private schools can effectively serve large numbers of special needs pupils (special education, limited English proficient, immigrant and migrant pupils), and there is extensive data that most private schools exclude pupils with special needs.
  - ✔ Private schools are often staffed by personnel with fewer credentials and experience than those in public schools, and only a percentage are accredited by an external review group.
  - ✔ Critical data about voucher recipients and their peers in private schools is neither required or reported. For the CEO Foundation voucher program in San Antonio, limited data was available on demographics of students, and no comparable data was available on student achievement.
  - ✔ There is no state accountability system in Texas established for private schools that receive public money.
- Students already have education options within the public school systems through magnet schools, charter schools, inter-district transfers and intra-district transfers.
- With a voucher program, it is not the parents who have a choice. The private schools have the choice about which students to accept.
  - ✔ On average, religious schools reject 67 percent of all applicants. Elite private schools reject nearly 90 percent of applicants.
  - ✔ Out of 13,500 Edgewood ISD students, 600 received vouchers and enrolled in private schools for the 1998-99 school year. The CEO Foundation reports that there were more than 2,202 applications.
  - ✔ Edgewood ISD students who were identified as not being in "at risk" situations were overrepresented as CEO Foundation voucher recipients.
  - ✔ The students who received vouchers had outperformed non-voucher recipients on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) while enrolled in Edgewood ISD the previous year.
  - ✔ Edgewood limited-English proficient (LEP) pupils were under-represented among CEO Foundation voucher recipients. Only 16.9 percent of voucher recipients were LEP, compared to a 22 percent LEP enrollment in Edgewood ISD as a whole.
- Voucher programs do not significantly improve educational achievement of students.
  - ✔ Despite claims to the contrary, there is no extensive empirical evidence that vouchers create competition that in turn improves the quality of local public schools.
  - ✔ There is emerging evidence that for-profit educational

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improve came along decades later. Faced with strong opposition to the dismantling of neighborhood-based publicly-supported schooling, voucher proponents essentially *re-packaged* their market-driven model in order to make it more politically palatable and seemingly less "anti-democratic" by appealing to more altruistic ideals. Training materials for promoting voucher programs even coached proponents to downplay free market notions and to use minority and low-income arguments to neutralize opposition from certain sectors (Nathan, 1999). Despite the carefully crafted veneer, vouchers are ultimately designed to serve as a replacement to the way schools in this country are structured, organized and financed.

Origins of the School Voucher Ruse

Much of the original impetus for replacing the traditional U.S. public school funding model with school vouchers, dates back to the work of economist Milton Friedman who first proposed the concept in the 1950s. Friedman proposed that "every family be given a voucher of equal worth for each child attending school" (Lowe, 1991). He contended that such an approach would provide parents more options. His simple idea found little support in that era partly because most Americans were generally satisfied with the performance of the existing system (even as later research demonstrated that public schools had historically ill-served minorities and students who were poor or limited-English proficient).

The idea of vouchers resurfaced in the late 1970s with John E. Coons and Stephan D. Sugarman. The two were early proponents of school finance equalization through public funding reform but abandoned that strategy in favor of an alternative that they perceived as having greater public appeal. In *Education by Choice: The Case for Family Control*, Coons and Sugarman argue for allocating public money to families (parents) who then get schooling alternatives.

The Coons-Sugarman arguments spawned an attempt in California to redirect public monies away from conventional school funding to educational vouchers via public referendum. The attempt was defeated by California voters in 1992.

The concept of providing vouchers in lieu of supporting a system of free public schools was reintroduced in 1990 with the publishing of *Politics, Markets, and America's Schools* by another set of economists, John Chubb and Terry Moe. The authors present the argument that free market approaches (or privatizing public education) is the "best" means of improving education. The publication struck a chord among conservatives who felt they were losing their long-standing control over school operations.

The voucher funding mechanism also appealed to some reform advocates who were frustrated with the unresponsiveness and ineffectiveness of some of the states' urban schools. In contrast to earlier efforts however, the proponents of vouchers argued in a variety of new forms, the centerpiece being one of providing "choice" for students and parents depicted as having little or no options. The recasting of the public policy debate as one involving "parent choice" over a child's education (rather than as providing vouchers to support public funding of private schooling) significantly altered the dynamics and eventually the alignments of those involved in promoting educational reform.

Writing for *The American School Board Journal*, Judith Brody Saks states that "the real fight is over how many of those dollars the private sector will get" (1997).

Private school vouchers take the focus away from increasing funds and resources for public schools that are accountable to all of us. Instead, they focus favor on spending public monies for private purposes with no accountability to the taxpayer and no mandate – and in some cases no desire – to educate all children.

Publicly funded vouchers are in fact taxation without representation. "School choice" is choice for schools. It provides no choice for parents, particularly not for poor parents, their children or their communities. Public funding should focus on improving public education instead of using public money on private school businesses. America needs *all* of its children to be educated, not just a select few.

Resources

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Albert Cortez, Ph.D., is the director of the IDRA Institute for Policy and Leadership. Comments and questions may be directed to him via e-mail at contact@idra.org.

Students for Sale – *continued from page 7*

ventures under serve or exclude students with special needs.

- Private schools in Texas do not have the capacity or capability to absorb large numbers of poor students.
  - ✔ In Texas, voucher proponents conceded that *as currently operated* Texas private schools could absorb no more than 1 percent (30,000) of the 3.4 million of students enrolled in public schools.
- Private schools would have to change in order to be eligible to receive state funding.
  - ✔ While some private schools are willing to accept voucher funding, most will reject any attempts to impact their student selection policies and practices.
- The main proponents of vouchers are the same forces that have historically opposed equal funding for all students.
- Vouchers would give a new government subsidy to private schools and wealthy parents with children already in private schools.
  - ✔ While touted as small-scale alternatives to public education, vouchers are ultimately intended to replace public schools with private, for-profit operations.
- Investing in neighborhood public schools is investing in communities.

For a copy of "Students for Sale – The Use of Public Money for Private Schooling" ($7), contact the IDRA Institute for Policy and Leadership, Dr. Albert Cortez, director, at 210/684-8180 or view the policy brief and related tables on line at www.idra.org (free).

Characteristics of a School that Is Safe and Responsive to All Children

K. Dwyer, D. Osher and C. Warger

Editor's Note: Research-based practices can help school communities – administrators, teachers, families, students, support staff and community members – recognize the warning signs early, so children can get the help they need before it is too late. "Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools" presents a brief summary of the research on violence prevention and intervention and crisis response in schools (1998). It tells school communities what to look for and what to do. The following is an excerpt from "Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools," developed by the Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice of the American Institutes for Research in collaboration with the National Association of School Psychologists for the U.S. Department of Education.

Well-functioning schools foster learning, safety and socially appropriate behaviors. They have a strong academic focus and support students in achieving high standards, fostering positive relationships between school staff and students, and promoting meaningful parental and community involvement. Most prevention programs in effective schools address multiple factors and recognize that safety and order are related to children's social, emotional and academic development.

Effective prevention, intervention and crisis response strategies operate best in school communities that do the following.

- **Focus on academic achievement.** Effective schools convey the attitude that all children can achieve academically and behave appropriately, while at the same time appreciating individual differences. Adequate resources and programs help ensure that expectations are met. Expectations are communicated clearly, with the understanding that meeting such expectations is a responsibility of the student, the school and the home. Students who do not receive the support they need are less likely to behave in socially desirable ways.
- **Involve families in meaningful ways.** Students whose families are involved in their growth in and outside of school are more likely to experience school success and less likely to become involved in antisocial activities. School communities must make parents feel welcome in school, address barriers to their participation and keep families positively engaged in their children's education. Effective schools also support families in expressing concerns about their children – and they support families in getting the help they need to address behaviors that cause concern.
- **Develop links to the community.** Everyone must be committed to improving schools. Schools that have close ties to families, support services, community police, the faith-based community and the community at large can benefit from many valuable resources. When these links are weak, the risk of school violence is heightened and the opportunity to serve children who are at risk for violence or who may be affected by it is decreased.
- **Emphasize positive relationships among students and staff.** Research shows that a positive relationship with an adult who is available to provide support when needed is one of the most critical factors in preventing student violence. Students often look to adults in the school community for guidance, support and direction. Some children need help overcoming feelings of isolation and support in developing connections to others. Effective schools make sure that opportunities exist for adults to spend quality, personal time with children. Effective schools also foster positive student interpersonal relations – they encourage students to help each other and to feel comfortable assisting others in getting help when needed.
- **Discuss safety issues openly.** Children come to school with many different perceptions – and misconceptions – about death, violence and the use of weapons. Schools can reduce the risk of violence by teaching children about the dangers of firearms, as well as appropriate strategies for dealing with feelings, expressing anger in appropriate ways and resolving conflicts. Schools also should teach children that they are responsible for their actions and that the choices they make have consequences for which they will be held accountable.
- **Treat students with equal respect.** A major source of conflict in many schools is the perceived or real problem of bias and unfair treatment of students because of ethnicity, gender, race, social class, religion, disability, nationality, sexual orientation, physical appearance or some other factor – both by staff and by peers. Students who have been treated unfairly may become scapegoats and/or targets of violence. In some cases, victims may react in aggressive ways. Effective schools communicate to students and the greater community that all children are valued and respected. There is a deliberate and systematic effort – for example, displaying children's artwork, posting academic work prominently throughout the building, respecting students' diversity – to establish a climate that demonstrates care and a sense of community.
- **Create ways for students to share their concerns.** It has been found that peers often are the most likely group to know in advance about potential school violence. Schools must create ways for students to safely report such troubling behaviors that may lead to dangerous situations. And students who report potential school violence must be protected. It is important for schools to support and foster positive relationships between students and adults so students will feel safe providing information about a potentially dangerous situation.
- **Help children feel safe expressing their feelings.** It is very important that children feel safe when expressing their needs, fears and anxieties to school staff. When they do not have access to caring adults, feelings of isolation, rejection and

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disappointment are more likely to occur, increasing the probability of acting-out behaviors.

- **Have in place a system for referring children who are suspected of being abused or neglected.** The referral system must be appropriate and reflect federal and state guidelines.
- **Offer extended day programs for children.** School-based before- and after-school programs can be effective in reducing violence. Effective programs are well supervised and provide children with support and a range of options, such as counseling, tutoring, mentoring, cultural arts, community service, clubs, access to computers and help with homework.
- **Promote good citizenship and character.** In addition to their academic mission, schools must help students become good citizens. First, schools stand for the civic values set forth in our Constitution and Bill of Rights (patriotism; freedom of religion, speech and press; equal protection/nondiscrimination; and due process/fairness). Schools also reinforce and promote the shared values of their local communities, such as honesty, kindness, responsibility and respect for others. Schools should acknowledge that parents are the primary moral educators of their children and work in partnership with them.
- **Identify problems and assess progress toward solutions.** Schools must openly and objectively examine circumstances that are potentially dangerous for students and staff and situations where members of the school community feel threatened or intimidated. Safe schools continually assess progress by identifying problems and collecting information regarding progress toward solutions. Moreover, effective schools share this information with students, families and the community at large.
- **Support students in making the transition to adult life and the workplace.** Youth need assistance in planning their future and in developing skills that will result in success. For example, schools can provide students with community service opportunities, work-study programs and apprenticeships that help connect them to caring adults in the community. These relationships, when established early, foster in youth a sense of hope and security for the future.

Research has demonstrated repeatedly that school communities can do a great deal to prevent violence. Having in place a safe and responsive foundation helps all children – and it enables school communities to provide more efficient and effective services to students who need more support. The next step is to learn the early warning signs of a child who is troubled, so that effective interventions can be provided.

The full text of this public domain publication is available at the Department of Education's web site at <www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP/earlywrn.html> and in alternate formats (in English and Spanish) at <www.air-dc.org/cecp/guide/Default.htm>. For printed copies of the guide, contact ED PUBS toll free at 1-877-4ED-PUBS (1-877-433-7827), or by e-mail at edpuborders@aspensys.com.

Legislature Grapples – *continued from page 2*

School Facilities

Another set of school finance discussions involves proposals for increasing the amount of funding for school facilities, upgrading the level of funding for Tier II or the *Guaranteed Yield* portion of the state funding system, and requiring local property tax cuts tied to increases in state funding for local schools. Related changes would reduce the number of districts that are required to share their wealth (known technically as *recapture* or *Chapter 41* districts). They would also extend the *hold harmless* provisions that allow the state's wealthiest school districts to continue to spend amounts per pupil that are comparable to their expenditures during the years preceding the Edgewood school district equalization decision.

At the time this article was written the Texas Senate had passed SB 4, sponsored by Senator Teel Bivens. This measure incorporates retirement, tax relief, increased teacher salaries, increased funding for facilities and other aspects of the state funding system.

On the surface, the increased funding for education seems positive, but analyses call in to question the extent to which the plan will enhance equity in the Texas funding system. Reacting to an early draft of the proposal, the Equity Center (an organization representing the state's poorest school districts) observed that it provides more funding per pupil for the wealthiest districts than for the poorer districts that qualify for *Guaranteed Yield* funding.

At this writing, the Senate has adopted a plan that provides for increasing the basic allotment to $2,345, increasing the guaranteed yield level to 23.10 per penny of tax effort, and raising teacher salaries by an average of $3,000. New features call for a special "new school allotment" for fast-growing districts that are building new schools and additional funding for the state's facilities funding component. Total new funding for public education that is included in the measure is $1.156 billion in 1999-00 and additional $1.27 billion in 2000-01.

The House version of the school finance bill differs significantly from the Senate version. The House plan includes provisions for increasing teacher salaries and instructional improvement, campus staff development, *Guaranteed Yield* funding increases, a fast growth allocation, additional funding for state support of school facilities, and funding for "program improvements" including the Texas reading initiative, after-school initiative, student stress initiative, kindergarten and pre-kindergarten expansion, and second chance high school programs.

Due to the controversial nature of the proposed revenue distribution, and emerging House and Senate differences, it is not yet clear how these proposed funding concentrations may change. Regardless of the final configuration, it is clear that this legislature intends to increase the level of state funding provided for public education.

School Vouchers

As public school forces compete for available surplus monies, voucher proponents have stepped up their efforts to get the state to adopt some variation of a state funded voucher plan to provide public tax monies to private schools, including religiously affiliated schools. The original proposals would have involved hundreds of thousands of pupils and many of the state's largest school systems. Several voucher bills mandated participation by all major urban districts and involved low-income pupils who failed one or more portions of the TAAS or who attended low performing schools.

Voucher supporters, however, were forced by major opposition to scale down their proposals to limit the voucher "experi-

Legislature Grapples – *continued on page 11*

Legislature Grapples – *continued from page 10*

ments" to smaller numbers of students and a handful of districts that would be designated by the state Commissioner of Education.

In contrast to previous years when voucher proponents took a low profile stance to add voucher language as amendments to existing legislation, the 1999 voucher battles have become high profile affairs involving high powered lobbyists and strong support from the Texas republican leadership who were recipients of significant campaign contributions from pro voucher forces.

Although the Senate education committee approved an experimental voucher plan on a 5 to 4 vote, voucher proponents have thus far been unsuccessful in forcing a vote in the full Senate.

In the House, strong support for public schools and opposition to vouchers has created a relatively cool climate among many House members, making the adoption of a even a so-called "pilot" voucher program less than likely.

Across the state, community leaders, parents, teachers, children, youth, advocacy organizations, educators and policy makers have rallied against school vouchers. In San Antonio for example, individuals and organizations (including IDRA) have joined together to form the Coalition for Equity and Excellence in Public Education to support the use of public money for neighborhood public schools and oppose any effort to divert public tax funds to subsidize private education. The group is dedicated to improving neighborhood public schools by helping to channel the community's support for public education.

The coalition has continued to voice its concerns regarding publicly funded vouchers and sponsored a letter writing campaign that generated more than 4,000 letters by parents, children and community members that were delivered to policy makers in Austin.

At a separate event sponsored by the Texas Freedom Network, more than 100 religious leaders traveled to the capitol to voice their opposition to any form of publicly funded voucher system.

This month, IDRA released a policy brief, *Students for Sale – The Use of Public Money for Private Schooling*", that outlines the dangers of vouchers and their potential impact on Texas children (Cortez, et. al., 1999; see also Page 7).

Strong political pressure from conservative leaders has the voucher issue lurking in the shadows of education discussions. We will not know if vouchers will be thrust upon the Texas education system until the session is completed.

Student Discipline

Even before the tragedy in Colorado, some Texas lawmakers had expressed concern about youths who are considered potentially a threat to school staff and fellow students. Others however based their concerns on emerging evidence that some aspects of Texas' alternative education programs were not working as originally intended.

Policy makers in state capitals have tried to create ways for schools to deal with violence and criminal behavior. One of the newer methods has been to separate offending students by placing them temporarily in alternative settings where they are supposed to receive personalized support. The Texas legislature established such a policy in 1995 requiring school districts to have an "alternative educational setting for behavioral management."

This spring, state lawmakers spent several days dealing with disciplinary alternative education issues, including (1) procedures for referring and placement of pupils who commit serious offenses while off school property and (2) policy reforms to improve the quality and accountability of alternative education operations.

The latter efforts were triggered by statewide reports of alternative education programs that were warehousing low income and minority pupils and where little or no communication occurred between the student's home and the receiving alternative campus.

IDRA's policy brief, *Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs in Texas – What is Known; What is Needed*", examines the details of how this idea has been carried out in Texas (Cortez and Robledo Montecel, 1999). Findings include:

- **Minority students are over-represented** in removals to these alternative programs.
- The primary reason for the removals involves violations of school districts' codes of conduct instead of the major offenses in the Texas criminal code.
- These programs serve **more than 90,000 pupils a year and cost millions of state taxpayer dollars**. But we know very little of what they do, much less how (or how well) they do it.

While many recognize that most alternative program educators are doing the best they can under 'difficult conditions punctuated by minimal local support, a growing number of families impacted by these alternative settings are raising significant concerns. Lawmakers were also confronted with horror stories of alternative education operations that dressed pupils in orange prison like garb and provided minimal actual classroom instruction during the course of the school day.

Though perceived as a means of dealing with seriously disruptive pupils, what actually emerged was a picture of a good idea gone awry that required more extensive state supervision. Though it is too early to tell how policy reforms in this area will actually be framed, changes will probably be adopted.

Student Achievement

An observation by many who follow Texas legislative sessions is that it is always easier to adopt funding reforms when there is extra state money available. Given the projected multi-billion dollar state surplus, it is clear that more funding will be provided for different aspects of public education. Texas continues to be committed to maintaining students and schools to high standards, with the ultimate criteria tied to student-based outcomes that include student performance on state tests, attendance, in-grade retention and dropout rates. It is also evident that – although Texas is being lauded as a leader in school reform and improvement, outperforming many comparable states on measures of progress and/or student achievement – state level data indicates that Texas still has far to go before it is truly a place where equal educational opportunity exists for all pupils.

Despite the potential for some improvement during the current session, it is clear that much more will remain to be done after the year 2000.

Resources

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Legislature Grapples – *continued on page 12*

Legislature Grapples - *continued from page 11*

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** IDRA's series of policy briefs on four key issues in education, developed by the IDRA Institute for Policy and Leadership, is designed to inform community and policy decisions during the Texas legislative session and beyond. The policy briefs are available for $7 each from IDRA and are available free on-line at www.idra.org.*

Two-Way Bilingual - *continued from page 3*

minority families. Therefore, it is critical that parents be vigilant with the education their children are receiving and that the type of instruction they get facilitates fluency in English, while valuing the home language (see "Parents Organizing" on Page 4).

Economic necessity may finally be pushing for equity in some areas of our education system. Regardless, we must be vigilant that such opportunities are not the sole domain of the middle class, but that children in poor communities may also have the opportunity to learn without losing part of their cultural identity.

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Educational Technology: An Update

Keiko E. Suda

Inside this Issue:

- **Activities for youth leadership**
- **Reading strategies**
- **Litigation on vouchers**
- **Appropriate language instruction**

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Educational technology is not a new phenomenon. But the explosion of technology in our increasingly global economy has meant that it takes on new significance as an integral part of preparing students for economic and social viability. Education technology can also remove many of the barriers to learning faced by students.

For example, the Internet allows educators to remove certain barriers of geography from students' access to the world, it provides the opportunity to remove the barrier of economic status and individual learning styles and can minimize the barrier of special needs (EDvancenet, 1998).

As part of President Bill Clinton's educational technology initiative, the administration has challenged the nation to assure that all children are technologically literate by the dawn of the 21st century. They are to be equipped with the communication, math, science, reading and critical thinking skills essential for enhancing learning and improving productivity and performance.

Four pillars are at the core of this technology literacy challenge:

- Modern computers and learning devices will be accessible to every student.
- Classrooms will be connected to one another and to the outside world.
- Educational software will be an integral part of the curriculum – and as engaging as the best video game.
- Teachers will be ready to use and teach with technology (U.S. Department of Education, 1996).

Effectiveness of Technology

One of the biggest debates about educational technology centers on the question, "Does it really work?" Does it produce real and sustained educational gains, or is it just the latest educational fad? While technology is definitely not the panacea for our educational woes, neither is it merely a passing fad. It is clear that technology is here to stay. As the information age continues to pick up speed, it will become increasingly more important to prepare students for this ever-changing technological society.

Several studies have attempted to evaluate the effectiveness of technology in affecting various measures of student learning. A study conducted by Interactive Educational Systems Design, Inc., indicates that educational technology has significant positive effects on achievement for all major subject areas in preschool through higher education. Educational technology was also found to have a positive effect on students' attitude toward learning and on student self-concept (Software Publishers Association, 1996).

Research on the Buddy System Project in Indiana has shown that the use of technology results in:

- an improvement in writing skills three times higher than those in comparison schools,
- a better understanding and a broader view of math,
- more confidence in computer skills,
- an ability to teach others,
- greater problem-solving and critical-thinking skills, and
- enhanced self confidence and self esteem

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(Rockman and Sloan, 1995).

In addition to impacting learning and achievement, technology literacy impacts future employability and earnings. According to Larry Irving, assistant secretary of commerce for Communications and Information, by the year 2000, 60 percent of jobs will require skills with technology (Benton Foundation, 1998). Even today's job market is feeling the impact of the spread of computer technology.

For example, between 1979 and 1995, real wages dropped 23 percent for people with less than a high school education and 12 percent for those with only a high school diploma, yet wages rose 4 percent for college graduates and 12 percent for those with advanced degrees. Economists attribute as much as half of this increase in demand for more skilled workers to the spread of computer technology (Benton Foundation, 1998).

Armed with this data, schools should no longer be asking themselves *if* they should take advantage of educational technology, they should be asking *how* and *how soon* to do it.

Access to Technology

Most data reveal that public schools continue to make progress toward meeting the first pillar of the president's technology literacy challenge, which advocates accessibility of technology to all students. In 1998, 98 percent of all schools owned computers (ETS, 1998). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in

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Resources for Integrating Technology into the Classroom

Adventure Online
<http://www.adventureonline.com>

Adventure Online delivers web-based core learning materials in math, reading, writing, social studies and science. Each lesson or activity is brought to life through one of the real world adventures. This site encourages you to sign up your classroom for Adventure Online, which allows students to see various locations around the world without leaving the classroom.

Intercultural Development Research Association
<http://www.idra.org>

See articles from the IDRA *Newsletter* on integrating technology into the classroom and on technology equity.

Integrating Technology into Classroom Practices
<http://[illegible].cmich.edu/[illegible]/index.html>

This site is an extensive syllabus on a course offered at Central Michigan University on how to integrate technology into classroom instruction. It includes vignettes, rubrics, materials and lesson plan ideas, as well as other resources.

STAR Center *Teachers' Internet Use Guide*
<http://www.starcenter.org>

Using this online tool, teachers can design, develop, implement and evaluate standards-based lessons. Teachers save time and energy by using links to online lessons and curriculum units that can be customized for a class. Users can also submit their own lessons to this free dynamic on-line bank of teacher-created lessons.

Project Whistle Stop – Truman Digital Archive Project
<http://www.whistlestop.org/[illegible]/integrating_tech.htm>

This site describes projects and ideas for using technology in classroom activities and has links to other online resources.

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The Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) is a non-profit organization with a 501(c)(3) tax exempt status. The purpose of the organization is to disseminate information concerning equality of educational opportunity.

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Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program:

Preparing Leaders for the New Millennium

Oanh H. Maroney, M.A.

As the turn of the century rapidly approaches, there is much concern about how our society's advanced technology will impact us. The past several years have also yielded increased concern about our youth and their future. Some of this concern focuses on the quality of schools and education. Other concerns are with issues such as drugs, violence and teen pregnancy. While these are all valid and critical concerns, our focus needs to be drawn away from the viewpoint that things are "so bad," to a conversation about how to improve circumstances for our young people and our nation.

The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program

Changing traditional viewpoints and making a difference for youth is the aim of the Intercultural Development Research Association's (IDRA) Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program. The program has been doing just that since its inception in 1984. Believing that *all children are valuable; none is expendable*, the program takes secondary students who are considered to be at risk of dropping out of school and places them as tutors of elementary students, enabling the older students to make a difference in the lives of the younger students. The positive recognition, instruction and support provided by the program helps the tutors stay and do better in school. Currently, in the 1998-99 school year, the program is running in 17 cities in the continental United States, as well as in Puerto Rico, Great Britain and Brazil.

One important element of the program is *leadership development*. Each school year, students are provided numerous opportunities for leadership development. The academic tutoring structure itself provides the tutors with a unique perspective by which to develop character and academic and leadership skills. In addition to the tutoring component, the students also have the chance to meet various leaders and role models from throughout their communities.

When possible, the students participate in a *Youth Leadership Day*. IDRA works with program site teacher coordinators and administrators to plan and conduct district-wide, region-wide, interstate and, sometimes, international Youth Leadership Days. In some instances, it is possible for students to travel short distances to participate in in-person workshops and activities. In other cases, we are able to facilitate communication and learning between program sites via e-mail and video-conference technology. It is always the support of the school and district officials, as well as others in the community, that make the Youth Leadership Days possible and successful.

Ruben Valdez (fourth from the right), of the Valley Coca-Cola Bottling Company, Inc., in San Benito, Texas, assists with the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program leadership day.

Valleywide Youth Leadership Day

On March 26, 1999, more than 500 middle and high school students from Texas' Rio Grande Valley gathered at the South Padre Island Convention Center for what proved to be a unique, challenging and fun-filled experience. The students came together from their 17 respective campuses in Brownsville Independent School District (ISD), La Joya ISD, McAllen ISD and Mission ISD. In doing so, they had an opportunity to meet more of their peers with whom they form part of an international network of young people who are beating the odds.

The session was made possible by the support of officials from the 17 schools and four district offices, as well as logistical and financial support from the San Benito and McAllen branches of the Valley Coca-Cola Bottling Company, Inc. The support provided by all of these entities reaffirms the necessity and value of recognizing our young people and providing them with opportunities to enhance their educational experience.

The objectives for the event were for the students to do the following:

- experience working in teams and define the importance of teamwork;
- analyze what is needed for a team to succeed at a task;
- define what the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program means to them; and
- work as a team with students from other campuses.

The students participated in several leadership development activities throughout the day. All of the activities required that students collaborate with their team members to achieve a given task. For each activity, the participants were given the goal for the task at hand, basic instructions and the materials they needed to accomplish the task. In addition, most of the exercises were timed, which further facilitated teamwork and leadership within the small groups. All of the activities required that the participants think and problem solve in creative ways.

Examples of activities included: (1)

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creating a solid structure from drinking straws and masking tape and explaining how it represents the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program and 2) tutors untangling themselves from a "human knot" without letting go of one another's hands.

One of the highlights was the closing session. During the course of the day, the student groups were given time to create, develop and prepare a creative presentation of some sort (banner, song, skit, etc.) to share with the entire group during a "show and tell" closing session. Every member of the group was included in each small groups' presentation on teamwork and leadership to the larger group.

Creative presentations included poetry, dramatic acts, rap songs and a human pyramid. The closing session – and, indeed, the entire day – was a wonderful opportunity for the tutors to acknowledge and reaffirm themselves, their teachers and the students that they tutor. In doing so, the value of the task that they perform as tutors greatly increases.

> **"Our nation needs to take a more pro-active approach to developing and nurturing our young generation of leaders."**

At the end of the leadership day, students were asked to share the "highs" and "lows" of the day with the other members of their small group. Prior to their departure, they were also asked to complete and submit a formal evaluation of the day and the activities presented. Overall, the participants offered very positive feedback about the session and remain excited and optimistic about continued opportunities to meet, learn with and learn from their Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program network peers.

Thinking About Change

Too often, young people find themselves as players in a self-fulfilling prophecy of failure because their schools do not believe in the inherent ability of every child to learn. However, schools should not bear the burden of blame all alone. As a society, we have instilled a "survival of the fittest" approach into our normal routine of thinking and acting. Such an approach leads us to forget about and, often times, even deny the intrinsic value of each individual. We are not all the same, but we each deserve comparable opportunities to learn and to achieve our full potential.

The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program stands out as a leader in providing such opportunities. The program takes students whom our society has cast down and given up on and gives them a new prophecy to fulfill – a prophecy of success. And while the majority of valued youth initially are not honor students or elected student body leaders, they are still some of the best and brightest, in their own right. In fact, many students who started out in the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program have gone from being "truants" and "troublemakers" to being campus leaders, honor students, and role models.

Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutors participated in leadership development activities such as untangling themselves from a "human knot" without letting go of one another's hands.

Juan Flores (bottom right), of the Valley Coca-Cola Bottling Company, Inc., in San Benito, Texas, poses with Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutors and teacher coordinator, Yolanda Olvera (top left) of Faulk Middle School in Brownsville, Texas.

Over the course of the program's 15 years of implementation, we have heard wonderful stories and testimonies of how the lives of thousands of students have been changed forever because someone simply took the time and effort to say, "I believe in you." The program has impacted more than 68,500 students, parents, teachers and administrators, in turn impacting the communities they live in.

As the new millennium comes upon us – less than 200 days remain in 1999 – our nation needs to take a more pro-active approach to developing and nurturing our young generation of leaders – the entire generation. It is not enough to be satisfied with culling only a few of the many and nurturing their talents and dreams. Nor is it acceptable to continue to allow one child – everyone – to grow up without an opportunity to achieve.

One final thought: Here and there, I have seen items and heard discussions that focus on the nation's changing population demographics (including age) and raise concerns about today's generation of young people being the bread winners and social security providers for tomorrow's generation of older citizens. I have to wonder how it is that we – knowing that these youth will be our sustainers someday – can continue to devalue them and deem even one of them expendable. I do not know the answer. However, I can foresee what the result will be if our society does not change its outdated mode of thinking. Efforts like the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program brighten our future.

Oanh H. Maroney, M.A., is an IDRA research assistant and administrative assistant to the IDRA executive director. Comments and questions may be sent to her via e-mail at contact@idra.org.

Project FLAIR:

Working Together for a Better Learning Environment

Rogelio López del Bosque, Ed.D., Hilaria Bauer, M.A., and Juanita C. García, M.A.

IDRA's equity assistance center, the South Central Collaborative for Equity, identifies school districts that need information, training and technical assistance in critical areas of pedagogy. It also provides information, training and technical assistance.

The clinical training in critical pedagogy that the center provides focuses on:

- strategies to increase access for girls and minorities to math and science;
- teaching strategies to increase skills development and competencies for minority students; and
- teaching and accessing the school curriculum through English language development.

An example of how the center is fulfilling its obligations in these critical pedagogy areas is IDRA's work with a core group of teachers at J.C. Ellis Elementary School in Jefferson Parish, Louisiana. The group is planning the center's implementation of a series of workshops, observations, coaching, guidance and evaluations. These activities are encompassed in an IDRA reading project called *Focusing on Language and Academic Instructional Renewal* (FLAIR). The school began implementation in January 1999.

IDRA has been working with several school districts to increase the cognitive growth and academic achievement for all students, including language minority students, through this intensive language-across-the-curriculum program. Through the project, a task force of teachers and administrators at each campus analyzes their instructional programs, learns and practices new strategies, evaluates their success and sets goals for the next year.

J.C. Ellis Elementary School was selected for Project FLAIR on the basis of financial need, student ethnic population, and need for training and technical assistance. The task force consists of teachers across different grade levels and content areas, including the bilingual and English as a second language (ESL) teachers.

As the project has been evaluated at participating schools, six key points about Project FLAIR have been identified. Project FLAIR:

- is a systemic reform initiative,
- is a research-based model,
- provides training and staff development,
- provides classroom demonstrations,
- increases teacher competency and morale, and
- impacts students positively.

The type of consistent training and technical assistance with classroom demonstrations, mentoring and coaching that Project FLAIR offers is something that no other organization has done before. There are several unique features of Project FLAIR.

Classroom Demonstrations

The classroom demonstrations are done using the teacher's classroom and students. Project FLAIR is not about the constant lecture and theory approach to teaching teachers. The IDRA trainer demonstrates lessons using the teacher's students and literally show the teachers how it can be done. The basis of this approach came about because of the many teachers who have had countless numbers of workshop training sessions with little or no follow up or with the presenter either never having been in the classroom or having been out of the classroom for many, many years.

Project FLAIR – continued on page 6

Project FLAIR (Focusing on Language and Academic Instructional Renewal)

IDRA's Project FLAIR increases cognitive growth and academic achievement for *all* students, including language minority students, through an intensive language across the curriculum program.

This three-year initiative involves the whole campus incrementally.

First Year

A needs assessment is drafted, a campus task force is formed, and campus objectives are defined in order to design a campus-tailored plan for increasing teaching effectiveness and student performance. The campus plan includes specific instructional strategies and campus efforts that are focused to implement academic achievement. The task force members are the architects of the campus plan. They receive training and technical assistance in order to implement the plan. In addition, these task force members are equipped to become effective mentors for the rest of the faculty.

Second Year

Task force members coach and mentor at least half of the faculty on effective language development strategies for language minority students.

Third Year

Task force members coach and mentor the rest of the faculty. All teachers and students increase their expectations and their academic performance.

For more information, contact Rogelio López del Bosque at IDRA (210-444-1710) or contact@idra.org.

Project FLAIR – continued from page 5

Teacher Task Force

An integral component of Project FLAIR is the teacher task force. Project FLAIR's process calls for valuing and validating the task force teachers for all previous training and current knowledge. The consistent follow-up and follow-through training for the task force is a critical and non-negotiable part of Project FLAIR. As members of the task force, teachers take stock of the program and, after an analysis of teacher, librarian and principal interviews, create a group vision and prioritize areas to be impacted. This analysis also becomes a part of a data base of critical information for post evaluation.

Project FLAIR starts the first year with a task force, which includes no more than 12 teachers, who become coaches and mentors to new Project FLAIR teachers so as to carry out the entire process within a three-year period.

Evaluation

As Project FLAIR is put into practice, it is constantly being assessed and reviewed according to the needs of the school. The data is maintained for documentation and summative evaluation each year. The practices and strategies utilized in Project FLAIR also help to reinforce the goals and objectives, developed by the task force, as a means of working toward reforming the educational programs for all of the students in the school.

Key Considerations

Some of the concerns that have arisen during the execution of Project FLAIR are typical when a reform process is being implemented. One fear that teachers and administrators express is that the project will not continue due to the lack of funding, other programs being implemented or the creation of something that the rest of the school community is not ready to handle. Because of the intense training of the task force teachers during the first and second years, lack of money to pay substitute teachers is a real concern.

Another concern is the lack of accessibility to quality children's literature and a lack of funds to purchase such materials for further implementation of the process. Lack of planning time for the teachers to institute better lessons and school-wide activities is also an issue that has arisen.

Fortunately, these are the issues that are being discussed and analyzed carefully as part of the school administration's commitment to support Project FLAIR. Although the project is exciting for teachers involved, if there is no support for the process, they lose faith in the process and the school and it becomes another one of those programs that was started but never completed.

Key Highlights

According to the participating teachers at J.C. Ellis Elementary School, three highlights of Project FLAIR are the lesson demonstrations, practicing cooperative learning strategies and discovering a sense of team spirit that leads to renewal.

Lesson Demonstrations

IDRA trainers demonstrate selected lessons in the participating teacher's classroom. Teachers are able to observe how a particular strategy is used in the classroom with their own students. In addition, they are able to ask questions after the demonstration has taken place and during the debriefing time. Many teachers find it useful to write questions as they observe, then ask the IDRA trainer.

Cooperative Learning Strategies

Another highlight of the program is the use of cooperative learning strategies during the lesson and throughout the training. As teachers are exposed to the strategies, they are able to incorporate them into their classroom, leading to better teaching of critical and social skills in their classes.

Team Spirit that Leads to Renewal

Teachers feel renewed as they develop camaraderie with each other. There is a sense that bettering the school is not a one-person effort. Teachers feel that because of the activities they participate in during Project FLAIR, they are able to empathize with each other's issues, and they look for solutions collectively.

Looking Ahead

As a result of participating in Project FLAIR, the administration and the teacher task force at J.C. Ellis Elementary School worked cooperatively to create a schedule that will emphasize students' academic achievement. In this manner, teachers will have an opportunity to plan together better lessons following the Project FLAIR model of *Into, Through and Beyond*.

In addition, the faculty and the staff in this school will implement cooperative learning in order to improve the campus discipline. Via cooperative structures, students will acquire social skills that will allow them to focus on the instruction and to work better with other students, and teachers will have a more cohesive plan for classroom management.

Upcoming Events

"The Dawning of the Education
Millennium: Educational
Excellence for All Children"

U.S. Department of Education
1999 Regional Conferences on
Improving America's Schools

October 6 to 8
Tampa, Florida

November 8 to 10
Salt Lake City, Utah

December 15 to 17
Chicago, Illinois

For more information call
1-800-203-5494 or see
www.ncbe.gwu/iasconferences.

Project FLAIR in J.C. Ellis Elementary School has brought about positive change. Teachers and administrators are working together to provide a better learning environment that is conducive to high academic achievement. For that matter, positive changes have been occurring at the other participating schools as well.

This research-based model provides the foundation and direction for systemic reform, and it falls in line with the Accelerated Schools project philosophy of "unity of purpose, empowerment coupled with responsibility and building on strengths." Project FLAIR helps people in the school community work together to transform every classroom into a powerful learning environment, where students and teachers are encouraged to think creatively, explore their interests and achieve at high levels. In turn, it uses the school's philosophy and process to create its own vision and work collaboratively to achieve its goals.

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Appropriate Language Instruction: Stephanie's Story

Juanita C. Garcia, M.A.

When my oldest granddaughter entered the fourth grade this year, her early reading difficulties became more complex. Her learning to read and write has been hindered by of a number of uncontrollable events in her early developmental years. It was not her fault that she was pulled from schools in mid-term several times, that her young parents had to follow good jobs and work late hours struggling to make a living for their growing family, or that during these tough times there was a limited number of significant adults to give her the quality interaction that was needed to lay a solid oral foundation for literacy and language development.

Now that there is more stability in her life, Stephanie is faced with the difficult task of reading in order to learn the academic content that is required for educational success at the same time she struggles to learn the basics of reading and writing. Research reveals that if she was not an independent reader by the end of third grade, her chances of catching up would be poor (Elfrieda, et.al. 1998).

My granddaughter is one of the countless number of similar fourth graders who are not successful readers and are faced with more complex abstract learning. Children with the same dilemma are now labeled as at-risk of poor reading outcomes as well as the more frightening label of at-risk of dropping out of school (National Research Council, 1998). The task of learning to read and understand the complexities of text is put on children's innocent shoulders despite the uncontrollable events in their young lives. They are then held accountable for their success.

How can we hold these young children accountable for learning to read? If children are not successful, then we have failed as teachers, parents, educators and citizens of this democratic society. Reading is essential to success in our society. We must do whatever it takes to help our children become successful readers and writers, or their educational careers will be imperiled because they do not read well enough to ensure understanding (National Research Council, 1998).

As I listened to my granddaughter's principal and teachers, I could not help but count the endless number of excuses they made for her failure. Their answer was to hold her back a year. But according to IDRA's policy brief, *Failing Our Children - Finding Alternatives to In-Grade Retention*, retention does not benefit students academically or socially. Students who are retained view it as a punishment and suffer lower self-esteem (1999). When it comes to our children, there are no excuses, and retention is not the answer. All children have a need and a right to learn to read. When educators come to terms with this, our children will succeed, and we will begin to close the gap.

"Excellent instruction is the best intervention for children who demonstrate problems learning to read."

Reading Success Network

The national network of federally-funded comprehensive centers is sponsoring the Reading Success Network to improve student reading achievement by developing a national network of trainers of teacher-coaches. These teacher-coaches are supporting classroom teachers' efforts to provide powerful instruction in reading. The STAR Center is the comprehensive center funded by the U.S. Department of Education to serve Texas. It is a collaboration of the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA), the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin, and RMC Research Corporation.

In my work with the STAR Center's Reading Success Network, I have encountered some successful schools and quite a few not-so-successful schools. The children who succeed in reading are in classrooms that display a wide range of approaches to instruction. Excellent instruction is the best intervention for children who demonstrate problems learning to read (National Research Council, 1998). Reading pedagogy focuses on providing students with interesting texts. The role of the teacher is to help children read these texts to make them comprehensible so that the students understand the message (Krashen, 1998).

According to Krashen's "input hypothesis," the development of literacy and the development of language occur when we understand messages. In schools that are successful in fostering reading achievement there are five common characteristics:

- all adults inside and outside the school work together;
- the school builds systematic program links across grades;
- everyone accepts responsibility for *all* children;
- teachers provide excellent and motivating instruction; and
- everyone monitors students' progress (Elfrieda, et.al. 1999).

The not-so-successful schools continue to blame outside forces that they cannot control and face each day with negative attitudes about the children they are teaching. Their focus should be on providing these children with opportunities to develop their language and their thinking along with helping students feel good about themselves and emulating the values of successful adults. This is what children desperately need. A successful teacher knows exactly where her students are and what they need, has high expectations, establishes partnerships with parents, views all children as intelligent, teaches with joy, awakens interest in reading and gives children hope for their future (Rodolfo, 1992).

My commitment to IDRA's mission to help create schools that work for all children continues, and now it has a deeper urgency. Children deserve adults who work together

Stephanie's Story – *continued on page 12*

Litigation on Vouchers

Albert Cortez, Ph.D.

Editor's Note: The following is an excerpt from "Students for Sale – The Use of Public Money for Private Schooling" (with updated information about litigation in Ohio and Maine) published by the IDRA Institute for Policy and Leadership in May.

Those who oppose or have reservations about vouchers have expressed many concerns, including the numerous legal aspects of the issue. In states where legislatures have adopted voucher plans, individuals and groups have filed suits challenging the legality of those initiatives. To date there have been suits filed in Arizona, Georgia, Maine, Ohio, Vermont and Wisconsin. State courts in Wisconsin and Ohio have issued two distinct and apparently contradictory decisions. Additional litigation is pending, and it is anticipated that the issue will ultimately be decided by the U.S. Supreme Court.

The legal questions are complex and difficult. While a body of case law related to use of public monies to fund education in private settings is emerging, some voucher proponents claim that there has been no truly precedent-setting decision that can be used to guide state or national legal deliberations on the question.

Yet in the 1971 *Lemmon vs. Kurtzman* case, the U.S. Supreme Court concluded that federal money could be used to provide educational services to students enrolled in private and sectarian schools. The case is considered a landmark case in its departure from earlier rulings forbidding the use of federal tax revenues to support educational services provided in private and religious school settings. While allowing some public funding for services provided to private schools, the case established three criteria that are seen as the litmus test by which related measures are judged (NCPE, 1997). The Supreme Court's three criteria include:

- ✓ does the legislative action have a secular purpose?
- ✓ does its primary effect neither advance nor inhibit religion?
- ✓ does the action create excessive entanglements between government and religion?

The National Coalition for Public Education (NCPE) comments:

> Although the Supreme Court has yet to rule on vouchers per se... in a similar case (*Committee for Public Education and Religious Liberty vs. Nyquist*, 1973) the high court held that grants and tax benefits (supporting attendance at private religious schools) had the unlawful effects of advancing religion because the aid unavoidably would be used to fund sectarian activities, even though the financial benefits flowed through the parents (NCPE, 1997).

According to NCPE, "Voucher advocates inaccurately claim that several Supreme Court decisions support the constitutionality of vouchers," including *Mueller vs. Allen* in which the court ruled that granting state tax deductions for tuition, materials and transportation expenses was acceptable. The NCPE points out that *Mueller* involved benefits that were available to public and private school students and that only an "unattenuated financial benefit flowed to parochial schools" (NCPE, 1997).

In the **Wisconsin** case, *MTEA vs. Benson*, the Wisconsin State Supreme Court overturned the Appeals Court decision on a 4-2 vote and concluded that the Wisconsin voucher program met all three criteria of the *Lemmon case* and thus did not violate state or federal provisions related to the separation of church and state. As a result, the program will be expanded from 1,500 pupils attending private nonsectarian schools to include 15,000 low-income pupils who may enroll in private *and* religiously affiliated institutions (PFAW, 1999).

Concerns with private school compliance in the Milwaukee voucher program recently surfaced. The NAACP has filed new litigation charging that many Milwaukee private schools that receive voucher funding have violated the random selection requirements by continuing to use screening criteria. Such possible violations include providing preferences for siblings of former private school pupils and parishioners and giving some families advantages over public school candidates.

The **Ohio** state courts thus far have taken the opposite view from the Wisconsin courts. In *Simmons-Harris vs. Goff*, the Court of Appeals issued a ruling striking down the Cleveland voucher program on the contention that it violated the constitutional provision relating to the separation of church and state. The State Supreme Court allowed the program to continue to operate until it reviewed and ruled on the case (Boyer, 1997). In May 1999, the Ohio State Supreme Court ruled that the program does not violate the separation of church and state provisions of the state constitution but that it does violate the provisions prohibiting the use of public funds for private schools.

In **Arizona**, litigation was filed in *Kotterman vs. Killian* challenging the constitutionality of the private school voucher tax credit law. Arguments have been presented at the state court level, and a decision is pending (PFAW, 1999).

In **Pennsylvania**, a case is challenging a local school district's decision to provide public school funding for students to attend local private schools. In *Giacomucci et al. vs. Delco School District*, plaintiffs are arguing that the action violates state and federal constitutional provisions (PFAW, 1999).

In **Vermont** and **Maine**, voucher proponents challenged rulings that limit use of state-funded vouchers to nonreligious public schools. In these two states, voucher programs have been in place that provide vouchers to rural residents to help subsidize attendance at private sectarian schools. Religious school officials, unhappy with that exclusion, filed litigation attempting to force state officials to expand eligibility. In May and June, courts in both states ruled that a tuition program may not be expanded to include religious schools. The Vermont decision was based on a church-state provision in the state constitution, while the Maine decisions were based on the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

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Litigation on Vouchers – continued from page 8

Though many cases on recent voucher programs are still making their way through the courts, the various decisions suggest that voucher programs must be carefully crafted to withstand legal scrutiny.

Resources

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For a copy of "Students for Sale – The Use of Public Money for Private Schooling" ($7) contact IDRA at 210/444-1710 or view the policy brief and related tables online at www.idra.org.

Educational Technology – continued from page 1

the fall of 1998, 89 percent of public schools and 51 percent of instructional rooms were connected to the Internet. Both of these figures have increased significantly since 1997, in part because of the funds available starting in 1998 through the E-rate program.

Another encouraging statistic is that the ratio of students to computers has gone down across the board and has almost equalized between high and low minority schools and poor and rich schools.

Regardless of the percentage of poor or minority students, the ratio appears to have leveled off at 6 students per instructional computer (NCES, 1999). It is important to look closely at the data to determine what the numbers really mean for *all* children and to determine where progress still needs to be made. In 1998, public schools with 50 percent or more minority enrollment had Internet access in only 37 percent of instructional rooms – 20 percentage points lower than schools with less than 6 percent minority enrollment (NCES, 1999). In addition, schools with high minority enrollment and schools with a large number of students eligible for the free or reduced price lunch program had a much higher ratio of students per Internet-accessible computer (NCES, 1999).

Perhaps the biggest and most important difference in access to technology across public schools lies in how that technology is used. In many cases, schools in poorer communities may not be using their computers in ways that have the greatest long-term benefits for students. All too often, they use computers for rote learning, drill exercises and word processing, which is nothing more than the 1990s version of typing. On the other hand, in wealthier schools where there is generally more money for curriculum and staff development, computers tend to be used to foster more complex learning activities, analysis and writing skills that command higher wages in today's economy (Benton Foundation, 1998).

Teacher Preparation

While significant progress has been made in the area of access to technological hardware and software, teacher preparation lags far behind. Teacher preparation is closely linked to accessibility, since professional development impacts how computers are used in the classroom and how students are given the opportunity to benefit from increasing access to technology.

According to a 1998 study, only 15 percent of U.S. teachers reported having at least nine hours of training in educational technology in 1994. The study also noted that helping teachers learn how to integrate technology into the curriculum is a critical factor for the successful use of technology applications (ETS, 1998).

Beginning in 1999, the U.S. Department of Education is awarding $75 million in grants to prepare teachers to use modern learning technologies. The program, entitled Preparing Tomorrow's Teachers to Use Technology, targets institutions of higher education in consortia with school districts, schools of education, non-profit organizations and other community partners for developing "significant reform strategies and innovative improvements in the preparation or certification of well-prepared technology-proficient future teachers" (U.S. Department of Education, 1999).

Integrating Technology into Classroom Instruction

Educational technology can take many forms, from a VCR or overhead projector to a multimedia computer with CD-ROM and Internet access. For those teachers who did not have the benefit of technology training as part of their preparation programs, this whole technology "thing" may seem a bit daunting.

The following is a short list of ideas for those eager to dive headfirst into the realm of technology and also for those who just want to get their feet wet. These ideas focus mostly on computer use but may be adapted for other technologies as well.

Identify the technology gurus among your colleagues. You may not know that someone has great ideas until you make the effort to really look at what your colleagues are doing. Take advantage of mini-lessons from them – computer-savvy teachers are usually more than happy to demonstrate to the willing novice how computers can be used to motivate and excite young learners (ETS, 1997).

- **Make one day every week (or maybe every month at first) "computer day"** when you plan a lesson based on the use of a computer.
- **Carve out some time just to "surf" the web.** Once you figure out how to log on, the Internet can provide a wealth of information and ideas in the form of research, lesson plan ideas, chat rooms, etc.
- **Design a "technology learning center"** where students can complete simple tasks. Some tasks that may have been feasible only with pen and paper a decade ago can now be completed using a computer and provide great introductions for students who are not proficient in using computer technology.
- **Develop your curriculum units so that certain components involve the computer,** whether it is writing a paper, recording data from a science project, researching a topic on the Internet, or utilizing more specialized computer software designed for specific tasks.
- **Think of technology as a tool, not a subject** (ETS, 1997). Remember that all of the technologies available today are simply tools that can be used to enhance learning and motivate students. They should fit into the learning goals you set for your students and should help them achieve these goals.

If you have access to the Internet, you may find web sites listed in the box on Page 2 useful in providing examples and advice on integrating technology into your classroom. The key to successfully integrating technology into the learning environment is

Educational Technology – continued on page 10

Educational Technology – *continued from page 8*

creativity and being pro-active in obtaining the necessary professional development.

Resources

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HIGHLIGHTS OF RECENT IDRA ACTIVITIES

In April, IDRA worked with **7,565** teachers, administrators and parents through **82** training and technical assistance activities and **170** program sites in **10** states plus the United Kingdom and Brazil. Topics included:

- Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) Strategies for Reading
- Sexual Harassment Prevention
- Building a Balanced Literacy Program
- Effective Use of Technology in the Early Childhood Setting
- Discipline Management

Participating agencies and school districts included:

- New Orleans Parish Public Schools, Louisiana
- Edinburg Independent School District (ISD), Texas
- Farmington Municipal Schools, New Mexico
- Garland ISD, Texas
- Rockford Public Schools, Illinois

Activity Snapshot

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation is funding *Project Alianza*, a collaboration of IDRA and the Mexican and American Solidarity Foundation to create a comprehensive and interdisciplinary teacher preparation and leadership development program to serve an increasing Hispanic student population in the U.S. Southwest and Midwest. The project is expanding the elementary education curricula at five universities to enhance the abilities of teachers, parents, administrators, school board members and community leaders to collaborate effectively. It focuses on kindergarten through sixth grade teachers – grade levels where bilingual education is mostly offered and where there is a shortage of well-prepared teachers. *Project Alianza* is enabling universities to tap into three groups of individuals who possess the basic requirements of a prospective bilingual education teacher: bilingual teacher aides, students in traditional bilingual teacher preparation programs, and teachers trained in Mexico to teach in their elementary grades (normalistas) and who are legal U.S. residents. The five-year goal was to serve 200 teachers. But during this first year, more than 300 applied, and 62 are already participating in this exciting project.

Regularly, IDRA staff provides services to:

- public school teachers
- parents
- administrators
- other decision makers in public education

Services include:

- training and technical assistance
- evaluation
- serving as expert witnesses in policy settings and court cases
- publishing research and professional papers, books, videos and curricula

For information on IDRA services for your school district or other group, contact IDRA at 210/444-1710.

Lessons Learned, Lessons Shared:
Texas Immigrant Education Collaborative

Pam McCollum, Ph.D.

Learn how to create an effective immigrant education program!

This publication shows educators what is necessary to develop and maintain appropriate programs for secondary level recent immigrant students.

Lessons Learned, Lessons Shared is divided into five main parts.

- ✓ A primer on the "basics" of immigrant education (i.e., demographics, legal issues, educational funding)
- ✓ Lessons learned through the TIEC at school sites, funded by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
- ✓ Four successful program initiatives: appropriate curriculum and instruction, a newcomers center, appropriate counseling and building linkages with the community
- ✓ Future directions of recent-immigrant education
- ✓ Appendices of varied resources including
    - ◆Immigrant students' rights to attend public school
    - ◆Organizations devoted to immigrant issues
    - ◆Immigrant education
    - ◆Internet resources
    - ◆Immigrant terminology

"Carmen is my superstar. When she got into the technical drafting program last year, once I saw the terminology involved, I thought here is a young lady with very limited English proficiency – might even be dyslexic – who might be overwhelmed by this program. Carmen is an intern with the water company now, and one of her designs is actually being seriously considered for one of the new outlying developments being set up in El Paso County."

– Program Liaison
El Paso, Independent School District

Order from IDRA
(ISBN 1-878-550-66-7; paperback; 60 pages; $24.95)

Stephanie's Story – continued from page 7

and teachers who teach with hope. All of these children are *our* children. Their future is intricately interwoven with our success as an educated democratic society.

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IDRA Bilingual Programs Evaluation Institute

August 3-4, 1999

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For further information contact Dr. Adela Solís or Ms. Carol Chávez at IDRA 210/444-1710.

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IDRA Newsletter

Note IDRA's phone and fax numbers have changed:
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[illegible] Volume XXVI, No. 7 August 1999

Inside this Issue:

- Strategies for teacher collaboration
- Bilingual teacher preparation
- Advanced skills instruction
- Upcoming events

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Texas Legislative Update

Albert Cortez, Ph.D.

Six months or 140 days after its grand opening, the Texas legislature went home with little fanfare. Legislators had approved a $3.8 billion increase in state funding for education over the next two years, a $3,000 increase in teacher salaries, a new funding tier for existing debt service (including targeted support for fast growing school districts) and modest increases for Tier I (basic allotment) and Tier II (equalization) funding. Yet there seemed to be little excitement surrounding these developments.

Many people acknowledged that teachers were in need of a pay raise in part because the state is facing a growing teacher shortage created by severe competition for new workers in the health economy.

However, many lawmakers tended to pay as much attention to limiting the extent that school districts can raise local taxes to supplement state allocations – even when these supplements are equalized by state funding formulas.

In the name of property tax relief, local schools were required to cut back local taxes by $1.3 billion to offset some of the increased state funding.

Legislators also considered action on such topics as mandated retention in grade based on student performance on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), school dropout rates, disciplinary alternative education programs and vouchers.

Retention in Grade and Early Childhood Education

Concerns about student achievement led to extensive discussions in the education committees of the House and Senate about the best ways to improve student performance. Some lawmakers pressed for punitive measures that focus on retaining students who fail the TAAS – proposing a multi-year phase-in that will lead to mandated retention in grades four, eight and 10. The mandatory retention is automatic unless a local grade placement committee unanimously votes to promote the student.

Strongly endorsed by the governor, the in-grade retention provisions call for early identification of pupils who are having academic difficulties as reflected on state measures and for targeted interventions to help students do better in subsequent TAAS administrations. If the interventions prove ineffective and the student fails the TAAS in two successive administrations, the student must be retained in grade, unless a special committee votes unanimously to promote the student.

In contrast, other policy makers stressed expanding state funding for kindergarten, pre-kindergarten and Headstart programs, believing that providing early access to high-quality early childhood programs is a more effective means of preventing future student underachievement (as is supported by educational research) (McCollum et al. 1999).

The fact that both programs were included in the final bill reflects the accommodations used to resolve conflicts programs that were characteristic of this last session.

School Dropouts

Despite much attention to dropout

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"Failure to directly address the state's questionable dropout counting procedures continues to raise reservations about the credibility of the state accountability system, previously praised by some as a national model for improving school outcomes."

counting and reporting irregularities examined by IDRA and chronicled in media accounts from across Texas before the legislative session, policy makers were unable to agree on any specific improvements to the current inadequate system (Supik and Johnson, 1999).

Many people acknowledged that local school system reports of dropout rates are being grossly underestimated. State dropout statistics are considered so suspect that national agencies, such as the National Center for Education Statistics, report an alternative statistic based on state reported census data.

Yet resistance from administrative and school board forces (concerned with the effects of accurate dropout counts on their state accountability ratings) and some state leaders (concerned about how Texas might "look" in national media coverage) combined to stifle urgently needed changes in the state dropout reporting process.

State Senator Gonzalo Barrientos attempted to deal with the shortcomings in the state dropout counting and reporting procedures. He succeeded in getting his proposal (Senate Bill 1316) through the Texas Senate. Unfortunately, opposition to some of its provisions and a crowded calendar at the end of the session contributed to the bill's failure to be voted on by the House public education committee.

The state education agency in turn tried to ease concerns by touting emerging changes in its own methodologies and movement toward a state "leaver" counting approach that would help ascertain the status of students who may have left the Texas school system prior to graduation.

Unfortunately, the school leaver reports submitted in the first reporting period included a disproportionate number of students who could not be accounted for by local district officials. State educational leaders decided to exclude these "unaccounted for" students from official dropout statistics. To "motivate" local school officials to improve student tracking efforts, local school officials were warned that next year's dropout counts might include these "unaccounted for" students.

In attempt to alleviate some of the pressure on Texas schools that report high dropout rates, the Texas legislature provided a special allocation of $87 million to finance special intervention programs for ninth grade pupils identified as at risk of dropping out. The commissioner was given responsibility for drafting rules for awarding of grants for these programs. Some have suggested that criteria for awarding these special funds should consider not only the extent of local high school dropouts, but also whether the district proposes to use research-based interventions to impact the issue.

Perhaps a secondary criteria would also consider numbers of students reported as unaccounted for, giving priority to those schools that have done the best job of determining the status of all pupils who had left school prior to graduation.

Failure to directly address the state's questionable dropout counting procedures continues to raise reservations about the credibility of the state accountability system, previously praised by some as a national model for improving school outcomes.

Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs

Growing state concerns with mushrooming disciplinary alternative education program (DAEP) operations led to extensive legislative debate during legislative hearings.

Proponents of alternative education placements argued for expanding teachers' rights to remove students. Critics cited substandard curriculum, differential certification requirements for personnel working in DAEPs, absence of communication between DAEPs and referring schools, and creation of watered-down alternative accountability systems for DAEPs as cause for major overhauls in the current system (Cortez and

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The Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) is a non-profit organization with a 501(c)(3) tax exempt status. The purpose of the organization is to disseminate information concerning equality of educational opportunity.

The *IDRA Newsletter* (ISSN 1069-5672, © 1999) serves as a vehicle for communication with educators, school board members, decision-makers, parents, and the general public concerning the educational needs of all children in Texas and across the United States.

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A Model Teacher Preparation and Leadership Development Initiative: First Year Findings

Josie Danini Supik, M.A.

As borders (*fronteras*) are crossed, change occurs on both sides. Perhaps there is a better understanding and empathy for the other side. With the exchange of ideas, beliefs and values, there is the discovery that there are more similarities than differences – that beyond the borders we create, we all are committed to the same things.

In May of 1998, the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) was awarded funding for five years from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to develop teacher preparation and leadership development programs to increase the number of teachers prepared to teach English in bilingual and multicultural environments. Thus began Project Alianza (Alliance) – an extraordinary journey that crosses borders (of countries, cultures, organizations, world views and experiences).

Project Alianza has been a unique vehicle for crossing borders. This alliance of committed and dedicated organizations – IDRA, the Mexican and American Solidarity Foundation, Arizona State University, California State University at Long Beach, Southwest Texas State University, the University of Texas-Pan American, and the University of Texas at San Antonio – began with individual relationships. Now, one year later, a true alliance exists that transcends the individual relationships and includes others we have met on the journey, such as the registrar who now "sees" the value of teacher training in Mexico and has changed her part of the world by making the admission process easier for normalistas.

Project Alianza's objectives include:

- Increasing the number of bilingual teachers by enabling the certification of teachers (teacher aides and regular students from the United States and normalista teachers trained in Mexico).
- Promoting the contextual understanding and interaction among parents, communities, schools, colleges and universities, and policy makers.
- Developing leadership skills for working with diverse students.
- Conducting research that will inform the university community on reform efforts at the university level.
- Disseminating research findings to the university communities, surrounding communities and policy makers; and
- Establishing ties between U.S. and Mexico universities, enabling professor and student exchanges, collaborative research and shared curriculum development.

These objectives will be accomplished by developing, field-testing and disseminating comprehensive, pluralistic and integrated models. These models will prepare communities and educators to respond to the increasing diversity of student populations in schools (kindergarten to 16) and to exercise leadership in responding to these students.

At the end of the five-year grant period, this project is expected to have the following results:

- Graduated 200 certified or endorsed bilingual education teachers who are prepared to serve bilingual, bicultural students;
- Created models that other communities and universities may use to enhance their preparation programs and outreach strategies;
- Developed capacity among a wide range of stakeholders to serve an educational system that must be effective in educating a diverse student population through leadership or diversity skills training;
- Informed the university community through a series of research reports on reform efforts at the university level that will support public schoolwide reform directed at increasing the achievement of Hispanic students and eliminating the achievement gap between minority and majority students; and
- Tapped unused resources that improve the quantity and quality of teachers of bilingual and bicultural students.

Project Alianza – *continued on page 4*

Did you know?

In Texas...

- *In 1993, 8 percent of the bilingual and English as a second language (ESL) teachers were working with emergency teaching permits. The largest proportion of teachers not fully certified were in bilingual and ESL programs.*
- *In 1998, based on demographic data and a 22:1 student to teacher ratio, there was a shortage of 7,264 bilingual teachers.*
- *In 1997, there was a 7.1 percent increase in the number of students in bilingual and/or ESL programs and a deficit of 3,115 certified bilingual teachers.*
- *In 1997, there were 493,623 limited-English-proficient (LEP) students in grades kindergarten through 12, a 23.1 percent increase from 1993 and 39.1 percent increase from 1992. Of these, only 225,803 (45.7 percent) were served by bilingual education programs.*

Nationally...

- *A total of 42 percent of public school teachers have LEP students in their classes.*
- *Nearly 25 percent of schools in high poverty areas report difficulty in finding bilingual education teachers.*
- *Only 29 percent of public school teachers with LEP students in their classes report that they have received formal training to teach LEP students.*
- *In California, there is a need for 19,700 bilingual education teachers; currently 11,979 classroom teachers possess bilingual education credentials and certificates.*

Project Alianza – continued from page [illegible]

Evaluating Project *Alianza*

The evaluation process is also a collaboration with all alliance partners capturing the key events and processes through quarterly reporting to IDRA. At our meetings, in our conversations, in all of our interactions, we strive to listen, understand and document important and valuable insights.

Although we are still at the beginning of this journey, we have already made great strides. There has been an overwhelming response to the call for Alianza applicants. More than 300 normalistas and other students from across the United States have wanted to be a part of this effort. Many of the applicants learned of the project through word of mouth alone. Sixty-two students (22 more than planned during this first year) have already been admitted and are enrolled in Alianza universities.

Each student comes with his or her own story. Two students walked off the migrant fields as workers and walked into an Alianza university and are now enrolled to become teachers. It is these stories that re-affirm our commitment to the success of Project Alianza. In its infancy, the project is already making a difference in the lives of all who are a part of it.

Teacher Preparation

Four universities were to recruit and enroll 10 normalistas as the first cohort of students to their bilingual education programs. The four universities identified more than 300 normalistas and other students for the program and enrolled 62 students (57 normalistas and five paraprofessionals).

- California State University at Long Beach identified more than 75 normalistas, received applications from 35 normalistas, and enrolled 13 normalistas.
- Southwest Texas State University identified seven normalistas and 25 paraprofessionals, received applications from seven normalistas, and enrolled five normalistas and five paraprofessionals.
- The University of Texas Pan American identified more than 100 normalistas, received applications from 33 normalistas, and enrolled 15 normalistas (three of the normalistas are also paraprofessionals).
- The University of Texas at San Antonio identified more than 100 normalistas, received applications from 34 normalistas, and enrolled 19 normalistas. The extraordinary demand and enthusiasm for this effort resulted in the university taking an unexpected path – admitting more than the 10 students originally planned for this first year. By leveraging university resources (in one case a U.S. Department of Education Title VII project), more students were accepted and admitted into Project Alianza. One unanticipated benefit is that by accepting the second cohort of students (spring 1999 instead of summer 1999), the students are able to participate in specially-designed intensive English classes and thus expedite their entry into regular academic courses. This is a crucial point given the tremendous need for intensive English language preparation among normalistas.

Finding: Recruitment Strategies

Finding normalistas in the community was not as difficult as anticipated. In fact, the majority of the participating universities have waiting lists for enrollment during the second year of the project. Our challenge will be to ensure that university education programs include normalistas as part of their regular recruitment efforts.

Finding: University Admissions Policies and Procedures

Educating admissions officers about the comprehensiveness of the professional teacher preparation programs of normalistas has allowed for greater flexibility in accepting appropriate portions of course work and granting degree credit. Our challenge will be to ensure that universities institutionalize a process for evaluating normalistas' course work for students who are not in the project.

Findings: University-based Support Systems

First, participating universities have unique strategies for developing English language proficiency. Sharing strategies has allowed them to capitalize on each other's successes and collectively strengthen their individual language development programs. Second, situations must be established where normalistas partner with regular bilingual education students. This has a profound impact on the development of language proficiency in English and Spanish and in developing sensitivity for cultural and linguistic differences. Third, universities must be flexible and pro-active by creating opportunities for participation of normalistas.

Our challenges will be to (a) capitalize on the successful components of the different English language development programs and create a series of models that can be shared with other universities; (b) develop a guide for partners to use in mentoring each other and developing sensitivity in teaching a diverse student group; and (c) create a system for supporting students with specific needs.

Finding: Bilingual Teacher Preparation Program Content

Bilingual teacher preparation program content when delivered in a bilingual mode provides opportunities for modeling teaching behaviors in a bilingual education classroom. Our challenge will be to provide opportunities for university training personnel to develop proficiency in a second language by partnering with personnel from a sister university in Mexico.

In the next years of the project the following is planned:

- Alianza universities will continue to recruit the second cohort of 10 paraprofessionals to the program.
- Alianza universities will continue to work with normalistas.
- Alianza universities will provide intensive English language training to normalistas and Spanish language training to English-speaking bilingual education students.
- Alianza universities will establish a mentoring program between normalistas and other bilingual education students and provide specialized counseling.

Leadership in Diversity

Dr. Blandina Cárdenas, a professor at the University of Texas at San Antonio, provided technical assistance to Project Alianza staff regarding the development of the leadership in diversity model. IDRA also developed a concept paper describing an "asset model" for developing the leadership in diversity model. This asset model allows for the discovery of partners' capacities and assets and the application of these assets to seeking solutions to barriers that affect the development of a community.

Finding: Partnerships and Assets

As a general rule, universities and communities operate in a "provider to client" mode rather a partnership mode where both share a common goal and capitalize on each other's unique assets to reach that goal. Our challenge will be to model and experience the benefits of educating a com-

Project Alianza – continued on page 7

Project Alianza *continued from page 8*

mainly as a partnership that acknowledges, cultivates and nurtures those assets that the university and community bring to the table.

Future plans regarding leadership in diversity include the following:

- The pilot change model for leadership in diversity will be finalized.
- Universities will establish committees on leadership in diversity that include school people, community leaders, parents, students and university personnel to provide guidance to the university in designing changes and in monitoring the implementation of the changes during the five years.
- IDRA will provide technical assistance to universities in implementing committees on leadership in diversity.
- IDRA will provide training to universities' committees on leadership in diversity.

Teacher for the Second Time Around

by Maria A. Avila

Why did I become a teacher? As a fifth grader I was a lucky student. My teacher had just graduated and was in an excellent position to do the job and do it right. She set the example of what a good teacher should be and motivated me to become a teacher without knowing it. Time passed, and as I pondered the question of what to do in the future, I thought, "What will it be like to work in a school? Help the community? How will it feel to see the children's faces to light up once they have learned how to read, write and solve math problems." It was time to make a decision. So I became a teacher.

My mother, who was born in Texas, told me after I graduated: "Daughter of mine, I am going to arrange all the paperwork for you to come with me to the United States." In one instant, that statement changed all the plans I had made for my future: teaching, going back to school to get my master's degree etc. All of a sudden, my life was on hold. A few months later we moved to Toledo, Ohio, and a new adventure began: learning English.

Learning English became my first priority. Teaching had to wait. Years passed. I found the love of my life, got married, and had children. I took care of them, but teaching was still in my heart. I applied for a job as a teacher's assistant and I got it. What a joy! Still, there was something missing.

In 1998, John Glenn, at age 77, went into space for the second time. At that moment, while watching the shuttle go up to space, something inside of me told me that if he could go into space for a second time at age 77, I can go to school for the second time, too.

Today, at age 47, I know teaching is still in my heart. Ever since I was in the fifth grade, the desire to teach was there and has continued for all these years.

Dissemination of Innovations

Arizona State University is completing research to support universities in their reform efforts for admission and preparation of bilingual education students. The research will encompass the following areas:

- *Spanish Language Competencies for Bilingual Education Teachers* will address the teacher's level of competency in the home language of students and how competencies should be developed and measured.
- *The Restructuring of "Escuelas Normales" in Mexico* will reveal how normal preparation in Mexico compares to teacher education in the United States and the different eras of change in the normal curriculum in the last 20 years.
- *Research-based Competencies for Bilingual Education Teachers* will discuss the commonalities of practice and competencies.

The three monographs will be available for dissemination in the next few months.

Findings Dissemination of Innovations

Dissemination of project findings requires an identification of targeted audiences, their specific information needs and preferred dissemination modes. The challenge will be to design dissemination protocols that best serve targeted audiences and stakeholders.

The University of Texas at San Antonio will look at three research questions:

- In what ways are normalistas unique as a group in terms of background, experience, beliefs and attitudes when compared to U.S. educated pre-service bilingual teachers?
- For normalistas, how do differences manifest themselves in terms of strengths within the teacher preparation program, challenges faced in preparing them as bilingual education teachers, challenges they face in becoming effective classroom teachers within the U.S. educational system and identity and belief systems?
- In what ways can distinctly unique characteristics of the different cohorts (normalistas and paraprofessionals) be used to enhance the pre-service preparation experience of all bilingual education teacher candidates?

The University of Texas-Pan American will use its experience with Project Alianza to look at the implementation of a dual language teacher preparation model. Also the university will prepare a report that contains the participants' stories.

Binational Collaboration

A [illegible] seminar about Mexico was held this summer. The seminar provided a broad, diverse and insightful vision of the economical, political, educational, social and cultural aspects of today's Mexico. The school-based seminar is providing an in-depth, first-hand look at another system, culture, beliefs and behaviors. Participants include IDRA staff, Project Alianza coordinators, university faculty and admissions officers. This teaching exchange is enhancing the sensitivity, understanding and compassion of those involved in the preparation of teachers who work with students of Latino or Mexican background in the United States. This is an environment in which the Mexican and American Solidarity Foundation has already undertaken.

This allows the results of people sharing their successes with each other. California State University at Long Beach already has a cultural exchange of professors teaching courses for Project Alianza. Presently, professors from the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional de Mexico in Mexicali are working with Project Alianza students – one professor is teaching anthropology and one professor is teaching mathematics.

Project Alianza *continued on page [illegible]*

Project Alianza – *continued from page 7*

Finding Binational Collaboration

Teaching and understanding the bilingual student in the United States is enriched by creating binational collaboratives where teachers and universities exchange pedagogical views and ideas. Our challenge will be to establish a system of binational collaboratives that become institutionalized and transcend the life of Alianza.

Institutional Changes and Institutional Relationships

As mentioned earlier, at California State University at Long Beach, an instructor from *La Universidad Pedagógica Nacional* in Mexico is teaching anthropology to Project Alianza students. The faculty and staff have become very accepting of using professors from Mexico to assist in the teaching of certain courses.

Prior to Project Alianza, CSULB provided programs serving normalistas coming from Mexico to take classes in the United States. Faculty and staff taught classes to these students. The project coordinator stated that now that the faculty and staff have taken ownership of the project, they feel the quality of courses they teach needs to be improved and that previously they had not been doing an adequate job. Faculty and staff have raised their own expectations about teaching normalistas.

Classes are taught on Saturdays and Sundays at California State University at Long Beach to enable normalistas to maintain jobs during the week. The University of Texas-Pan American, the University of Texas at San Antonio and Southwest Texas State University provide classes at night.

Spreading the Word

Since its inception, Project Alianza has generated great interest in the media with articles already written by the *San Antonio Express-News* and the *Los Angeles Times*. IDRA's web site for Project Alianza is being accessed for information and contacts. In addition, the *IDRA Newsletter*, reaching more 8,000 policy makers, educators, foundations and community-based organizations, has featured the progress and accomplishments of the project. Information about Project Alianza will also be available to the general public through the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education (NCBE) – a federally funded project that is the repository of information on bilingual education in this country. (NCBE also distributes internationally upon request) – and research journals.

Project Alianza has had a remarkable beginning, enrolling many more students than originally anticipated, garnering institutional support, leveraging resources, creating and strengthening relationships among individuals and institutions. One of the factors that has accelerated the journey has been the unwavering commitment of the alliance to clear the path for students. Together, we are sharing our experiences and learning from each other as we take turns leading the way. This is not the end of our story, it is the beginning.

Josie D. Supik, M.A., is the director of the IDRA Division of Research and Evaluation. Comments and questions may be directed to her via e-mail at contact@idra.org.

For more information about the project contact Linda Cantu, M.A., Project Alianza coordinator at IDRA (210-684-8180).

Parent Coalition for Bilingual Education

Attention Bilingual Education Community

IDRA is happy to announce the formation of the Parent Coalition for Bilingual Education. Parents are supporting bilingual education and developing their leadership skills. Several events in the 1999-00 school year will be prime opportunities for parents to share information about bilingual education.

Statewide Bilingual
Video Conference
(Spanish/English)
September 25, 1999
12:00 - 2:00 p.m.
Education Service Centers

[illegible]

Texas Association for
Bilingual Education (TABE)
Annual Conference
October 20-23, 1999
Corpus Christi, Texas

An interactive parent institute focused on parent leadership for bilingual education will be held in conjunction with the conference. Parents will serve as presenters, facilitators and participants.

National Association
for Bilingual Education
(NABE)
Annual Conference
February 15-19, 2000
San Antonio, Texas

[illegible]

We invite you to participate in and support these efforts in a variety of ways:

1. **Identify parents** with children in bilingual programs to participate in the Parent Coalition for Bilingual Education. We would like names, addresses and phone numbers of parents who value and can attest to the successes of bilingual education.
2. Send us the names of **parent liaisons** and **outreach workers** who recruit parents for these events and disseminate this information.
3. Send us any copies of **parent-friendly** and **bilingual** (if possible) **information**:
   - The rationale for bilingual education
   - The benefits of bilingual education
   - How to identify a good bilingual program
   - The requirements for being a bilingual teacher
   - The skills a good bilingual teacher must have
   - How bilingual education is an effective means of teaching English
   - Various forms or models of bilingual education
   - How a parent can support high quality bilingual education
4. Join these efforts by contacting us and **disseminating this information** to any others who would be interested in participating.

The Parent Coalition for Bilingual Education will be meeting regularly. For information on the meeting dates and times, please contact Anna Alicia Romero (e-mail: aromero@idra.org) or Aurelio M. Montemayor (e-mail: amontmyr@idra.org).

Intercultural Development Research Association • 5835 Callaghan Road, Suite 350 • San Antonio, TX 78228-1190 • [illegible]

What a Difference a Year Made

Frank Gonzales, Ph.D.

A popular song recorded by Dinah Washington in 1964 includes the lyrics: "What a difference a day made: twenty-four little hours brought the sun and the flowers where there used to be rain" (Grever, 1961). It describes how wonderful life can be when the right combination of factors occurs.

This same wonderful transformation can occur in a classroom or in a school when the "right" things happen. The Intercultural Development Research Association's (IDRA's) Project FLAIR (Focusing on Language and Academic Instructional Renewal) is one of the "right" things that has made a difference at La Casita Elementary School in Clovis, New Mexico during the 1998-99 academic year.

As the name indicates, La Casita Elementary School is located in a barrio, a neighborhood of Hispanic homes, businesses and churches. The school has 429 students in kindergarten through sixth grade with 25 certified teachers.

The collaboration with other teachers not yet involved in Project FLAIR has increased and is an observable difference across the entire staff. The principal stated, "I've seen a difference in their interaction with the students and in how they help one another."

La Casita Elementary School is the only school in the district with certified bilingual teachers at each grade level. Consequently, monolingual Spanish speakers from 13 other campuses travel by bus to La Casita Elementary School, unless their parents request otherwise.

In many communities, the demographics of a school are used to reinforce the deficit-model assumptions about students because of the ethnicity, language and socio-economic level of the families. But the bilingual director of bilingual programs for the district, and Matthew Trujillo, principal of the school, saw the demographics as an opportunity to use the diversity of the campus and the home language of the children as a foundation for establishing a dual language program. Dual language programs provide integrated language and academic instruction for native English speakers and native speakers of another language. The goals are high academic achievement, first and second language proficiency, and cross-cultural understanding (Cazares, 1999). The district contracted with IDRA to implement Project FLAIR.

Project FLAIR is a three-year change process developed by IDRA in the early 1990s. It provides focused educational assistance to a district throughout the first year with a select group of teachers identified as a local task force.

The task force at La Casita Elementary School developed a vision statement: "La Casita Elementary will implement a dual language program that links the school, the home and the community by providing a language and technology rich curriculum that meets individual needs and develops biliteracy." The vision statement is serving as basis for all activities during the three-year project.

During the first year, two or more IDRA staff members made seven two-day visits to the campus. During the September visit, IDRA staff met with each of the task force members, observed them working in their classrooms, provided feedback and gathered base line data for the project. The November visit included an intensive two-day training process in which task force members established goals for the project, set dates for future visits and began the renewal process. All other visits from December to February involved actual classroom demonstrations with specific instructional strategies.

At the last meeting in of the year, members of the teacher task force shared how Project FLAIR has impacted them and their students. The following statements are some of the changes they enthusiastically described:

"The students have become active learners rather than passive learners."

- "You gave me a set of new tools for teaching writing, higher order thinking, etc."
- "I'm giving more ownership of learning to the students."
- "We have to fill out competency cards, and I was used to teaching in blocks. FLAIR helped me to integrate math, science and social studies with authentic literature."
- "It's bringing us together. We are focusing on the same path."

When asked how the project has impacted their campus, teachers told of student successes:

- "The students have become active learners rather than passive learners."
- "Students are working very well in groups. They are taking pride in their progress."
- "Students are also learning to respect each other and are now offering assistance to their peers."

Other changes that have occurred at the school include the formation of a library committee, which has requested Spanish language books and bilingual books for student and teacher use.

Task force teachers have shared the strategy training at their grade level meetings each month. This sharing has been extremely beneficial to the new teachers on campus. One teacher stated, "We are working together now as a team."

The collaboration with other teachers not yet involved in Project FLAIR has increased and is an observable difference across the entire staff. Mr. Trujillo stated, "I've seen a difference in the way the teachers are teaching, in their interaction with the students and in how they help one another."

What a Difference – continued on page 8

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S 1999 IMPROVING AMERICA'S SCHOOLS REGIONAL CONFERENCES

The Dawning of the Education Millennium: Educational Excellence for All Children

Come and get information on program updates, new initiatives, funding opportunities, comprehensive school reform, and lots more!

Education Reform Institutes

Examine in depth a number of critical issues on education reform. These 11 interactive institutes will include theoretical foundations, latest research findings, case studies and implementation strategies:

- 21st Century Teacher Education
- Reading for LEP Students
- Schoolwide Reading Models
- Involving Families in Improving Student Achievement
- Success in Pre-Kindergarten Programs
- Strategies for Restructuring High Schools
- Learning-Based Accountability
- Comprehensive Reform and High Standards
- Safe Schools and Healthy Students
- Evaluating the Use of Technology
- Mathematics Teachers and Professional Growth

Grantee Workshops

Meet with officials from the Department of Education and federally-sponsored technical assistance providers and learn more about funding opportunities, new developments, critical reauthorization issues and recent research findings.

Critical Issues Forums and Special Interest Seminars

Discuss critical issues and hot topics for the future with Department of Education officials and technical assistance providers. Tentative topics include: combining funds/schoolwide programs, Grant Administration and Payment System (GAPS), consolidated planning and reporting, IDEA 1997 implementation, E-Rate, National Writing Project, educational technology expert panel briefing, Reading Excellence implementation, ending social promotion, regional Technology in Education consortia services, ESEA reauthorization forum, turning around low-performing schools, and other current issues as they develop.

Who Should Attend?

- Principals
- Teachers
- Parents
- Teacher Education and Higher Education Representatives
- Superintendents
- Local Education Officials
- State Education
- Grant Administrators
- Program Managers
- Community-Based Educational Organizations
- National Educational Organizations
- Grantees of programs administered by the U.S. Department of Education's Offices of: Elementary and Secondary Education, Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Vocational and Adult Education, Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs, Educational Research and Improvement, Educational Technology, and Post-secondary Education

Please note: The Department of Education strongly encourages participation by state and local teams. A group discount is available.

Agenda

Day 1: *Creating the Big Picture*

8:00 am-5:00 pm	Registration
8:30 am-12:30 pm	Grantee Workshop
12:30 pm-1:30 pm	Lunch (on your own)
1:30 pm-3:45 pm	Plenary Session
4:00 pm-5:30 pm	Priority Presentations
6:00 pm-7:00 pm	Networking Reception

Day 2: *Looking In-Depth*

7:00 am-8:00 am	Networking "Table Talk" Breakfast
8:00 am-9:00 am	Plenary Session
9:15 am-12:15 pm	Education Reform Institutes
12:15 pm-1:30 pm	Lunch (on your own)
1:45 am-3:45 pm	Education Reform Institutes (continued)
4:00 pm-5:30 pm	Case Studies

Day 3: *Moving Forward*

7:45 am-8:30 am	Case Study Consultation Breakfast
8:30 am-11:30 am	Critical Issues Forums, Special Interest Seminars
11:30 am-1:00 pm	Luncheon (provided) with Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley
1:30 pm-5:00 pm	Technical Assistance Workshops and Consultations

October 6-8, 1999 • Tampa, Florida
Host Center: Tampa Convention Center

(Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, Virgin Islands)

November 8-10, 1999 • Salt Lake City, Utah
Host Center: Salt Palace Convention Center

(Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming, American Samoa, Federated States of Micronesia, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Republic of Palau)

December 15-17, 1999 • Chicago, Illinois
Host Center: Sheraton Chicago Hotel, Cityfront Center

(Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Wisconsin)

Registration

Teams of four or more from the same school or organization receive special registration discount! Registration Fees: $240 for individuals; $200 for teams of four or more.

For more information call 1-800-203-5494. If you have comments, or if you would like to be added to the IAS conference listserv, send a message with your name and e-mail address to: [illegible]. Also visit the conference web site for more information and for a registration form at [illegible]

Extending Advanced Skills Instruction into the Education of Disadvantaged Students

Adela Solis, Ph.D.

Since the early 1970s, compensatory education programs have dedicated numerous resources to the education of "disadvantaged" children (minority, poor, non-native English speakers) who are considered at risk of academic failure. Despite millions in expended dollars across two decades and the availability of technical assistance to schools, the academic standing of many of these children has not significantly improved. This was made evident in several national studies (Knapp and Turnbull, 1990; U.S. Department of Education, 1993).

There are multiple reasons for the lack of success of compensatory education. One is an underlying assumption among many educators that educationally disadvantaged children are not capable of learning at high intellectual levels. While their class peers are reading intriguing materials that challenge their comprehension, at-risk children usually participate in "remedial" classes in which teachers conduct rote drills on phonics, vocabulary and word decoding that are seldom linked to mainstream classroom activities.

A second reason, not unrelated to the first, is the notion that there is a hierarchy of skills. The premise is that some skills are "basic" and must be mastered before the more "advanced" skills can be learned. Thus, mastery of basic skills can become a barrier to learning at high intellectual levels. Since the expectation of many teachers of disadvantaged students is that they cannot learn advanced skills, these skills are almost never taught.

The persistence of these negative assumptions over many years has impacted curriculum and instruction. Many materials today are still mastery-based (teaching from basic to more complex skills). Also, the majority of teachers today strongly prefer and are only prepared to use a strictly sequenced and rote teaching methodology.

Research reveals that compensatory educators tend to:

- underestimate what minority, poor and limited-English-proficient (LEP) students are capable of doing;
- postpone more challenging and interesting work for too long – and in some cases, forever; and
- deprive students of a meaningful or motivating context for learning or using skills that are taught (Means, Chelemer and Knapp, 1991; Knapp and Turnbull, 1990).

Expert observers of compensatory programs report that there is a tendency in the education field to "decry the failure of disadvantaged students to demonstrate advanced skills, while failing to provide them with instruction designed to instill those skills" (Means, Chelemer and Knapp, 1991).

There are multiple reasons for the lack of success of compensatory education. One is an underlying assumption among many educators that educationally disadvantaged children are not capable of learning at high intellectual levels.

Disadvantaged students actually receive less instruction in higher order thinking skills than do other students, their instruction is more repetitive and their teachers tend to be very directive and break down tasks into smaller discrete pieces without knowing for sure (through proper assessment) if this rudimentary technique is necessary.

There have been observations of children's mental processing when teachers remove tasks from their context (decontextualization) for students to learn discrete or basic skills. The results indicate that this definitely offers less opportunity for teachers to connect with the children's personal experience or skills, which are the base for the conceptualization and problem solving that comprise higher order thinking processes (Knapp and Turnbull, 1990; Sutherland, 1992).

A number of reform efforts in the 1990s have emerged to address the low-performing trend among disadvantaged students. These reform efforts are using research in cognitive psychology and linguistics to point to the intellectual potential of all students. They also encourage daring innovative approaches to instruction.

Today, a good number of models have been developed for teaching advanced skills to at-risk disadvantaged children. These models are based on innovative approaches that have worked with other students, higher order thinking models, gifted education models, and others (Ellis and Fouts, 1993; Means, Chelemer and Knapp, 1991; U.S. Department of Education, 1997).

When schools implement such models, it has become evident that learning this change so that educators in compensatory programs can apply it requires reversing belief systems and practices that have been ingrained in the system for decades. Certain things specifically need to occur, such as (a) upgrading research knowledge to dispel old assumptions and misconceptions; (b) adjusting attitudes or dispositions about these students; and (c) restructuring the instruction within these programs.

What Critical Knowledge Should be Internalized?

Several findings from research and expert observations of schools can help to change old assumptions about disadvantaged students, the nature of their learning and corresponding pedagogy. The following are examples.

Research shows that basic skills learning is *not* an absolute prerequisite for learning advanced skills. Research in literacy (which can be generalized to other learning) shows quite clearly that students can acquire comprehension skills before they are good decoders of the printed word (Collier, 1995; Goodman, 1986). Students can also reason about new information,

Advanced Skills - *continued on page* [illegible]

Advanced Skills – *continued from page 9*

relate information from different sources, ask questions, summarize information from oral text and do other things often considered "advanced." When educators realize what it takes to understand numbers, master a language, and categorize and recategorize objects, they appreciate the magnitude of children's intellectual accomplishments (Kirby, 1984).

Some of the most significant barriers to intellectual development are affective in nature (e.g., low self-esteem, lack of self-confidence) and not the intellect itself. Cognitive psychology indicates that concepts do not exist in the environment itself; they are constructed by the child who interacts with that environment (Kirby, 1984).

Whether they come from poor or affluent backgrounds, children bring to school important skills and knowledge. For example, the majority of students of limited English proficiency have mastered the receptive and expressive skills of their native language. The particular language or dialect they have acquired may or may not match that of the classroom, but the intellectual challenge and consequent development is still equivalent in this case (Solis, 1993).

Most disadvantaged children have learned basic facts about quantity (e.g., the type of object – a penny or a pencil – does not change the number of those objects), they know much about social expectations (e.g., taking turns in a conversation), and they possess a lot of knowledge about the world (e.g., banks are places where you can get money to spend; not all flowers bloom in winter).

A New Attitude Toward Disadvantaged Learners

According to Means, Chelemer and Knapp, a "new attitude" toward teaching minority, poor and LEP students suggests educators should do the following (1991):

- **Appreciate intellectual accomplishments all young learners bring to school.** This means overtly recognizing children's accomplishments and getting children (and their parents) to recognize them too and, most importantly, incorporating them into the daily school activities.
- **Emphasize building on strengths rather than on remediating deficits.** For example, instead of taking a deficit view of educationally disadvantaged learners, educators can focus on the knowledge, skills and abilities that children bring to school (which come from accomplishments attained before coming to school as well as during off-school hours) and use these as a basis for building stronger skills and broader knowledge and making them applicable to classroom academic exercises.
- **Learn about children's cultures to avoid mistaking *differences* for *deficits*.**

It is essential for teachers to recognize that children from low-income backgrounds who may be different culturally are no different than affluent children in how they assimilate skills and knowledge from their environment. A poor child's decision on how to best manage a meager allowance is just as valuable a skill as an affluent child's choice-making when purchasing a computer game. A disadvantaged child's problem-solving related to baby-sitting a younger sibling may be even more intricate than another child's problem solving while playing on a swingset. An English as a second language student probably can defend, explain and convince someone in his or her native language as eloquently as a native English speaker can do this in English.

Another important note is that children from other cultures value education intensely. They come to school having mastered the receptive and expressive skills of their native language, and, as mentioned above, what they have acquired in their native language involved the same intellectual feat as learning it in English (Collier, 1995).

How Can the Curricula Be Revised and Restructured?

In order to encourage the teaching of advanced skills to disadvantaged students, some developers of education models advocate restructuring curriculum and instruction in a number of ways. Following are a few examples from Means, Chelemer and Knapp (1991).

1. Focus on complex, meaningful problems.

Subjects should be kept enough at a global level so that the purpose of the tasks is apparent and makes sense to students. For example, in the process of writing state government officials about guns in schools, students will acquire new vocabulary. Each word is learned in the context that gives it meaning while the students are attending to higher level skills.

This contrasts previous methods – which do not work – of breaking down academic content into small skills with the idea that each piece will be easy to acquire. By the time we break something into its smallest parts, the whole can become obscured. Children drill themselves on the spellings and definitions of long lists of words, often without really understanding the words or having any motivation for using them.

2. Embed instruction on basic skills in the context of more global tasks.

Use complex, meaningful tasks as the context for instruction on advanced and basic skills. Basic skills should be practiced within a real-world problem-solving assignment. For example, teachers can have the students use addition and subtraction to figure out how many children will be having milk and how many will be having chocolate.

The advantage of this strategy is that the more global task provides motivation for acquiring all the knowledge and skills essential to its accomplishment. It is worth learning the conventions of writing if that knowledge will enable the student to communicate with a distant friend. Word decoding is more fun if the word is part of a relevant message.

Most importantly, embedding basic skills into more complex tasks means that students can practice executing the skill in conjunction with other skills. Cognitive research shows that it is possible to perform subskills of a task without being able to connect the pieces into a coherent performance. Additionally, teaching basic skills in the context of more global tasks increases the probability that these skills will transfer to real-world situations. The decontextualized academic exercises characteristic of traditional basic skills teaching is so different from what any of us encounter in everyday life. The issue of what skills to apply does not come up when skills are taught in isolation, while it is unavoidable when taught in the context of complex, global activities (Goldman, 1990).

3. Make connections with students' out-of-school experience and culture.

Implicit in the point made above is the idea that in-school instruction will be more effective if it builds on what students have already learned out of school and if it is done in such a way that connections to

Advanced Skills – *continued on page 11*

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situations outside of school are obvious. Examples include having students work on creating a safe environment in school based on what they know about a safe environment at home and using the student's family's approach to buying food or planning meals. Using students' culturally-based ways of thinking in arriving at solutions (estimating measurements in recipes rather than using a measuring cup) makes an even tighter connection to the children's out-of-school experience and culture.

Conclusion

The programs and schools that educate disadvantaged students can begin to intervene instructionally in meaningful and challenging ways and to meet the reform challenge of the 1990s. To do this, they must discard assumptions about students' capabilities and a skills hierarchy, work to understand children's competencies in the context of broad, relevant research knowledge, and adjust how teachers see and work with disadvantaged students. Changing attitudes about these students will create a fundamental positive change within the programs that exist to serve them.

Resources

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HIGHLIGHTS OF RECENT IDRA ACTIVITIES

In May, IDRA worked with **8,112** teachers, administrators and parents through **74** training and technical assistance activities and **170** program sites in **11** states plus the United Kingdom. Topics included:

- Attracting and Retaining Quality Teachers
- Board Roles and Responsibilities
- Implementing School Reform Strategies
- Cultural Awareness
- Using the Web in Bilingual Classrooms

Participating agencies and school districts included:

- Texas Education Service Center, Region III
- Dallas Independent School District (ISD), Texas
- Arkansas Department of Education
- Chicago Public Schools, Illinois
- Kingsville ISD, Texas

Activity Snapshot

In July 1998, IDRA initiated a local coalition of community advocates, parents, school personnel and community-based organizations to focus on defending our neighborhood public schools and opposing vouchers. Members of the Coalition for Equity and Excellence in Public Education worked together to educate the San Antonio community about the dangers of public funds used for private schools. IDRA and the coalition directly reached more than 3,240 people through presentations and events. The coalition members are currently planning ways to continue to work together. IDRA's role was sponsored by the IDRA Mobilization for Equity project (a parent leadership project funded by the Ford Foundation) and the STAR Center (the comprehensive center funded by the U.S. Department of Education to serve Texas).

Regularly, IDRA staff provides services to:

- public school teachers
- parents
- administrators
- other decision makers in public education

Services include:

- training and technical assistance
- evaluation
- serving as expert witnesses in policy settings and court cases
- publishing research and professional papers, books, videos and curricula

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Legislative Update – *continued from page 1*

Robledo Montecel, 1999).

Witnesses described prison-type settings, sites where actual classroom instruction occurred for only a fraction of the day, and sites where students were left with little or no curricular materials that often were not aligned with instruction conducted on the regular school campuses. Some legislators were dismayed. Lawyers who testified before the committee talked of instance after instance where districts were challenged for failure to provide students with due process in the DAEP referral process. Others complained of young pupils being placed in DAEPs that mixed elementary and high school pupils and an absence of a graduated approach to student discipline in local school codes of conduct.

Because of major concerns raised by community members and educators, the legislature adopted a number of notable changes to Texas' alternative education program operations. Among the most noteworthy were:

- a requirement that DAEPs that serve pupils for longer than 90 days must be held to the same accountability standards as regular schools (rather than the alternative accountability process included in prior law);
- provisions barring the referral of students younger than age 10 to alternative programs; and
- expansion of teacher training in discipline management strategies and expanded training related to local district codes of conduct.

Subsidizing Private Education with Public Tax Money

Perhaps the most intense, divisive topic in education was the long debate on instituting a program to funnel state funding for private education, popularly referred to as school vouchers. Even before the session began, a collection of pro-voucher proponents actively campaigned for the issue – including funneling millions of dollars into the campaign coffers of pro-voucher candidates. Voucher proponents seemed poised for a victory even before the session began as they succeeded in getting the governor to endorse their concept of siphoning monies away from public schools into an "alternative" school funding scheme.

They had reason to be optimistic when the elections produced a victory for a pro-voucher lieutenant governor candidate (who also happened to receive a last minute million dollar campaign loan from the state's leading pro-lobby contributor). Add to that a Senate education committee chair who pledged to shepherd concerns through the Texas Senate. It is understandable how some pro-voucher proponents were already counting the millions of state dollars that would flow into private schools shortly following the session's close.

On the other side of the voucher issue was a loose knit collaboration of distinctive forces that included professional education groups (public school teachers, school boards, administrator groups), advocates of separation of church and state, and community-based organizations that had serious misgivings about the prospective impact of a voucher driven system on issues of equal access, finance equity, and quality neighborhood schools.

Voucher proponents celebrated as numerous legislative sponsors championed their cause, introducing several variations of "experimental" voucher plans, all designed to re-direct public school funding into private schools. A common thread in the major proposals targeted sub-groups of schools or districts in a strategic move perhaps intended to isolate those who would be impacted and thus decrease the possibilities of broad-based opposition.

A second common characteristic limited initial eligibility to students in low-income families – to strengthen the appearance that voucher proponents were seeking to "help" poor and minority pupils by expanding their school options.

A third common strategy called for targeting low performing school districts to allow for experimenting with the notion that low performing schools could be "motivated" to improve by taking away their money and their students. Citing anecdotal stories, relying on what on the surface seemed "logical" inferences, and often using misleading tactics, voucher proponents expressed great dismay when opponents challenged their empirical assumptions and the long-term intent of the voucher agenda.

Voucher proponents and opponents took their battles to all corners of the state, participating in countless debates, soliciting media coverage and bombarding policy makers with weekly, sometimes daily, information.

The issue itself took on national significance in emerging presidential politics. Texas lawmakers struggled with the complex questions that arose during the long and often heated exchanges by the opposing camps. One of the state's leaders even observed that he had found the issue to be only slightly less divisive than the state's most contentious issues.

Within this context, voucher proponents and opponents collided. What ensued were weekly forays and feints and withdrawals as voucher proponents sought to modify their proposals just enough to garner the votes needed for passage. Yet as they succeeded in getting one legislator to

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In-Grade Retention Legislative Outcomes

Governor Bush's Social Promotion Initiative

- To be phased in starting in 2004
- Children will be retained in grade if they fail the TAAS three times
- Alternative assessment can be used
- Each time a student fails an assessment test, the district must provide accelerated instruction in the area failed

Grade Placement Committee

- Composed of principals, parent or guardian, and the teacher
- Refers the student to an accelerated instruction group
- Parent or guardian can appeal before the committee
- Decides to retain or promote student based on indicators defined by the local board of trustees
- Unanimous vote required for promotion
- Decision is final

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deep objection to a specific provision, the same change caused new opposition in another camp.

The forces opposing the provision of public tax money to subsidize private schooling in turn initiated an array of strategies designed to inform the public and state legislators of the issues involved and countered each pro-voucher tactic with an organized opposition.

The effort eventually resulted in the Senate education committee's passage of a pro-voucher proposal. That plan, sponsored by Senator Teel Bivins of Amarillo, would have established a state voucher experiment limited to the six largest school systems in the state. It would have provided state monies to a percentage of pupils who would choose to opt out of public schools and attend private schools. However, opposition by slightly more than one third of the Senate led to the bill's demise. It never reached the Senate floor for a vote.

In the House of Representatives, voucher proponents were stymied by a public education committee that included a majority of voucher opponents. The House anti-voucher sentiment in turn was reinforced by the House speaker who had long expressed serious misgivings about the effects of vouchers on the majority of students who remain enrolled in the state's public schools. After months of bitter struggle, characterized by a rigid type of mentality on the issue, anti-voucher forces once again successfully staved off corporate subsidized efforts to dramatically restructure the manner in which Texas schools are funded.

IDRA worked collaboratively with anti-voucher forces pointing out that the proposals set forth by voucher proponents were little more than thinly disguised attempts to undo the years of struggle to create a more equitable funding system. Many people observed that a large proportion of policy makers who now wanted to "improve" public education with vouchers were the same persons who historically opposed reforms that would have made the schools more equitable and who often opposed providing additional state funding to help local schools improve their programs (Cortez et al., 1999).

When the smoke finally cleared, voucher proponents once again gazed at an empty plate, as no bill or amendment that would have created a state funded voucher plan was approved. Though disappointed, the voucher lobby vowed to resume its efforts during the 2001 legislative session. Anti-voucher forces no doubt will be ready for them again. Through constant grassroots action, voucher opponents proved that organized people can defeat organized money.

Teacher Salaries

In past years, actual local school teacher pay increases were impacted by whether or not school district salary scales already compensated teachers at levels above the state required minimum. Districts that paid above the minimum state salary scale had the option of either "passing through" the additional monies that they may have received as a result of the state prescribed increases in the minimum salary levels or providing only a portion of that increase since they were already paying above the state minimum.

The new policy however requires local school districts to provide an additional $3,000 above the levels that teachers would have received under the previous year's pay scale, ensuring that school districts provide the across-the-board increase intended by the legislature. Districts that were considering salary increases in excess of the $3,000 level however, were allowed to limit their local increases to the state prescribed levels. No additional state funding was provided for teacher pay raises above the $3,000 level.

Through constant grassroots action, voucher opponents proved that organized people can defeat organized money.

To help fund these salary increases, the legislature increased the basic allotment (the building block of the entire foundation program) from $2,396 per weighted ADA to $2,537, a net increase of $141 or 5.9 percent over the previous biennium level.

Special Population Program Funding

Funding for special population programs in Texas is based on a weighted pupil approach that is connected to the regular program funding provided through the basic allotment.

In this approach, special education, bilingual and English as a second language (ESL) programs, gifted and talented programs, and vocational programs are provided funding calculated as a percentage of the basic allotment.

For example, gifted and talented pupils are assigned a "weight" of 0.12, meaning that each pupil who is identified as gifted and talented and participates in a local gifted and talented program earns an additional 12 percent of the adjusted basic allotment amount for the district.

The amount of the additional funding that is provided by the state will vary from district to district, since the amount of actual state funding received for these programs, like most state funding, is based on the local property wealth of the school district.

In property poor districts, if the increase in the basic allotment produces an additional $50 per gifted and talented pupil, the district might receive $40 in state funding, with the additional $10 generated from local tax revenue.

In a wealthy district with similar ADA levels, $40 of the additional $50 gifted and talented allotment may come from local tax money, with the state providing only $10 from state coffers.

Weights for the populations other than gifted and talented include:

- limited English proficient students who participate in districts' bilingual education or ESL programs are assigned a weight of 0.10;
- students who are identified as eligible for the federal free or reduced price lunch program are assigned a weight of 0.20;
- students who participate in a district vocational education program are assigned a weight of 1.37 adjusted for the percentage of time they actually spend in vocational education courses; and
- special education pupils are assigned a weight based on their level of disability.

State funding amounts may vary based on wealth and district enrollments in these special programs. But for the most part, school districts will receive additional state funding for special population programs as a result of the domino affect triggered by the state increase in the basic allotment.

Facilities Funding

Additional features of the school funding bill include a special formula to provide

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Legislative Update – *continued from page 13*

facilities funding for school districts that have had enrollment growth greater than the state average.

Under the new plan, these districts qualify as a higher priority under the state facilities funding program. This was done by adjusting their "need" factors within the state facilities funding formula. Under the formula, schools are rank ordered by a combination of factors that include local property tax base wealth and debt service tax effort.

These new adjustments add district growth rates as a factor in the formula, significantly improving a fast growth district rankings. Since in past years, state funding has failed to provide enough state monies for all eligible districts, the adjustment will help ensure that rapidly growing districts get a better opportunity to get some state assistance to deal with their critical new construction needs.

The legislation also includes a special $50 million for districts opening new schools to help offset associated short-term costs.

To address qualifying districts that have already built new schools or upgraded existing facilities without state support, the legislature finally created a new state funding formula that provides state monies to help schools pay for existing facilities related debt.

Followers of the Texas school funding system litigation (known as the *Edgewood* cases) remember that while the state Supreme Court endorsed the constitutionality of the current funding system, it warned the state that its failure to adequately address the inequities in school facilities threatens the overall constitutionality of the system in the future.

ENLACE

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As the ENLACE managing partner, IDRA is hosting technical assistance sessions for prospective ENLACE grantees. See www.idra.org for details.

August 20 - Chicago
August 27 - Miami
September 3 - Los Angeles

Limited legislative action in this area and other areas has prompted the filing of a new challenge (labeled *Edgewood V*) to the funding system by the plaintiff intervenor who was involved in original *Edgewood* litigation. Judge Scott McCown, the presiding state district judge in the case postponed a hearing pending the completion of this legislative session in order to give the legislature an opportunity to address the issue before that court hearing.

The legislature proceeded to adopt a formula that provides new Guaranteed Yield funding based on existing debt service tax effort in local districts, a provision that IDRA has long championed. Whether there is sufficient state funding provided to fully support the new facilities Guaranteed Yield third tier remains to be seen, but incorporating this feature in the state funding scheme puts in place one more piece of the puzzle required for an equitable funding system.

As this writing a number of problems have been raised regarding this new tier including how to address "lease purchase" situations and debt paid from district fund balance revenue.

Property Tax Relief

Seeking to make political points for upcoming elections, policy-makers incorporated language into the legislation that requires local school districts to decrease local property taxes by excluding from school taxation the first $15,000 of local property values. To offset local school district tax revenue losses resulting from these exemptions, the legislature provided increased state funding to local schools. The cost of property tax relief provided by the state totaled $1.4 billion for the biennium.

While giving a minimum amount of tax reductions to local property tax payers, school districts experienced no net growth in overall revenue from this provision, since they are required to cut back local taxes in an amount equal to the state revenues as a result of mandated property tax cutbacks.

Conclusion

Early assessments of the overall impact of the state education funding bill indicate that the additional monies will slow the expanding gap in spending that had been created during the last legislative session, though its full effect may be impacted by the resolution of the questions related to funding for existing facilities.

Overall however the session may be marked by the prevailing concern with increasing teacher salaries and providing property tax relief (familiar old refrains in Texas) but not the types of reforms that put Texas at the forefront of educational reforms in this country over the last decade.

Resources

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Albert Cortez, Ph.D., is the director of the IDRA Institute for Policy and Leadership. Comments and questions may be directed to him via e-mail at contact@idra.org.

What a Difference – *continued from page 7*

Making a positive difference in the lives of children is what teaching is all about. In order to make that positive difference, teachers must feel empowered. Project FLAIR has made a real difference at La Costa Elementary School over the last year. What a difference a year made!

Resources

Gutierrez, F. (Ed.). *Program Alternatives for Linguistically Diverse Students* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence, 1999).

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For more information about IDRA's Project FLAIR see "Project FLAIR: Working Together for a Better Learning Environment," by R. Lopez, H. Rosario and J. Garcia, IDRA Newsletter, June-July 1999 or contact Rogelio Lopez del Bosque, Ed.D., at 210/444-1710 or contact@idra.org.

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- Including literacy and imagination in the early childhood curriculum
- The language, the teacher and the child: Integrating a harmonious whole
- Creating literacy opportunities at home
- Effective instructional strategies for reluctant young readers

Social Development
- Children's literature: A tool to develop social skills in the early childhood classroom

Child Development
- Developing language, thoughts and values in the early childhood classroom

Multicultural Education
- The use of authentic literature in the classroom: Sharing our values

Curriculum
- Integrating fine arts in the early childhood program: A project approach

Play
- The child's right to play

Research
- Minority students: The latest research regarding their education and their opportunities
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IDRA Newsletter

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Note IDRA's phone and fax numbers have changed:
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Community Supports Public Schools, Opposes Vouchers

Zane Chalfant

Inside this Issue:

- Changes in evaluation
- Limited-English-proficient trends in Texas
- Immigrant students' rights to attend school
- Early childhood education events

More than 25 years ago the Edgewood Independent School District (ISD) began a long battle for equity in school funding. During that struggle, the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) was founded by Dr. José A. Cárdenas, former superintendent of Edgewood ISD, to make state funded support of our public schools work for all children. At the heart of the Edgewood battle was whether or not students should have access to quality neighborhood schools.

Having eventually won improvements in funding equity and seeing better student performance in recent years, students face a new challenge that seeks to use public money for private school vouchers.

In a speech, IDRA's executive director, Dr. María Robledo Montecel, stated, "If the battle to keep more money for privileged children in privileged schools in privileged neighborhoods could not be won on the school finance front, it will now be fought through this thing called vouchers."

Vouchers are a way for public paid tax money to be given to parents so they can pay the tuition to send their children to private schools. Vouchers may be used to pay tuition in religious or non-religious private schools. Some of the funds to support such vouchers are taken from tax revenue that would have gone to neighborhood public schools, thus reducing the amount of money and programs available to support the majority of children who remain in public schools. Vouchers hurt public schools by taking away much-needed funds. They jeopardize equity by singling out a select group of children at the expense of all the rest. They threaten to tear down the bond that exists between our communities and our neighborhood public schools as children are dispersed throughout the city to attend private schools outside their neighborhoods.

For San Antonio, the voucher issue came to the forefront in the summer of 1998 when the Children's Educational Opportunity (CEO) Foundation offered tuition money for children in Edgewood ISD to go to private schools. In this case, the majority of the tuition money came from one San Antonio businessman and multi-millionaire, James Leininger.

The parents of 800 children sent their children to private schools, and the parents of 12,000 children kept their children in Edgewood schools.

Even though the foundation pays the tuition for children who leave district schools, Edgewood will experience a more than $3 million shortfall in its 1999-00 school year budget due to the loss of state funding for the 800 children who are no longer enrolled there. To Edgewood and many in the community, this represents a return to the days of inadequate and inequitable treatment of our children. It was a message to the Edgewood community that not all children were deserving of quality education, or a few would be chosen and the majority would be disregarded.

While some saw the CEO Foundation's offer as a generous move, others recognized it as a ploy to use parents to build support in the state legislature for a

Community Support – continued on page 2

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Community Support – *continued from page 1*

state funded pilot program.

As this school year began, the CEO Foundation demonstrated its intention to not seek additional private funding to continue the program. The foundation announced it is cutting off more than 100 children after one year of voucher funding due to a loss of private donations. The foundation did not propose to find new private donors to help the children – who had been recruited with assurances that the foundation would help them until graduation.

A study by the Texas Freedom Network highlights that the people leading private school voucher initiatives are not interested in improving conditions for all children. The study showed that many of the people and legislators who push for vouchers are the same individuals who opposed initiatives to equalize school funding.

Community Defends its Public Schools

IDRA collaborated with the Coalition for Public Schools and the Texas Freedom Network (both based in Austin) to examine the issue and ways to educate communities about it. In August 1998, IDRA hosted a meeting with key representatives from several organizations. This was the first meeting of what would become the Coalition for Equity and Excellence in Public Education. People such as civic leaders, school board members, leaders of parent organizations, members of religious organizations, school representatives, and interested citizens attended the meeting.

The newly formed coalition gained momentum as new members and organizations joined. By January 1999, the coalition had 30 member organizations and community leaders, with the capability of reaching 35 other supportive organizations and associations with memberships totaling more than 2 million people.

With the new coalition's single-minded action-oriented focus, the members found it easy to work together. Meetings focused on "brainstorming" how citizens and parents could be better informed about vouchers. Ideas flowed freely, and the group was quick to identify needed actions.

The coalition grabbed the attention of the community by first sponsoring a pro-public schools and anti-voucher rally at a local public school on March 6. More than 250 parents, teachers, interested citizens, and news media attended. Speakers included parents, students and policy makers like San Antonio city council member [illegible] Gonzalez and state representatives [illegible] and [illegible]. The crowd cheered enthusiastically as they spoke about vouchers' effects on public schools and children.

On March 18, coalition members, including parents, testified before the Texas Senate Education Committee on proposals that threatened to institute voucher test programs in various cities throughout Texas, including San Antonio. Testimony turned out to be an all-day, late night affair, but coalition members made clear that vouchers would be a return to unequal treatment of school children.

Following the senate testimony, weekly meetings of the coalition continued and members began planning the next pro-public education activity. It came on April 19 in the form of a letter writing campaign. Recognizing that they could not compete financially with the mass amount of wealth the voucher proponents had dedicated to promoting vouchers, coalition members elected to provide an opportunity for parents and community members to voice their concerns. Through their local networks and connections with statewide organizations, coalition members organized a mass letter writing campaign.

On the publicized date, volunteers met at a school district's parent services center to collect letters addressed to state policy makers. More than 6,000 letters were

Community Support – *continued on page [illegible]*

Brittany Sandra Romero, age 7, of [illegible] Elementary School in the San Antonio ISD helps stack letters expressing support for public schools.

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The Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) is a non-profit organization with a 501(c)(3) tax exempt status. The purpose of the organization is to disseminate information concerning equality of educational opportunity.

The *IDRA Newsletter* (ISSN 1069-5672, © 1999) serves as a vehicle for communication with educators, school board members, decision-makers, parents, and the general public concerning the educational needs of all children in Texas and across the United States.

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Significant and Worthwhile Changes in Educational Evaluation

Putting Value in Evaluation

Josie Danini Supik, M.A.

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[illegible]

IMMIGRANT STUDENTS' RIGHTS TO ATTEND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

[illegible]

School Opening Alert

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Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program Participants Testify before Congressional Committee

A middle school teacher and two seventh-grade students from Lincoln Multicultural Middle School in Washington, D.C., testified on the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program before a congressional committee. The hearing on May 18, 1999, was held by the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions and was focused on "dropout prevention and educating the forgotten half." Below is the text of their presentations.

After presenting congressional testimony on the IDRA Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, Lincoln Multicultural Middle School teacher coordinator, Courtney Adams (far left), and tutors, Anna Rosario (center left) and Marcos Price (far right), spend time with Senator James Jeffords (center right).

Marcos Price, seventh grader
Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutor

My name is Marcos Price. I am a seventh grader at Lincoln Middle School here in Washington, D.C. I live with my mother and two brothers. One of my brothers attends Radford Virginia College, and one of my brothers is an artist.

I have been in the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program for one year. I tutor two first-grade students at Bancroft Elementary School. I tutor them in math and phonics. Their elementary teacher tells me what the tutees are having trouble with.

When I first worked with them, the tutees didn't know how to add and subtract. Now that I have worked with them, they do. Their attitude has improved also. At first, they wouldn't listen to me. Now they are happy to see me. They come and give me a hug. When I don't go to tutor, they miss me. The elementary teacher I work with told me that she really has seen improvement in the tutees since the beginning of the year.

The program has helped me a lot too. Last year, I used to do my work, but I didn't really take it seriously. I used to hang out in the hallway; I didn't care about school. I thought I could get off with an easy education. My attitude has changed.

I used to talk back to teachers and didn't care what any of them said. But since I've been in the program, I now see that I shouldn't disrespect them.

My mom says I have really changed since I've been in the program, even since the first couple of days. When I come home, I am really glad to see her. I always tell my mom, "I love you, Mom." She always tells me how much I have improved.

And I think I have improved because I have been working as a tutor in this program. The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program has changed my attitude about being a good student. The teacher coordinator, Mr. Adams, really helped me. He tutors me and helps with the problems I have. He also teaches us to be on time. He wants us to have a better life.

I am glad I am in the program. I really wanted to help the tutees. I am also glad I am getting paid. This is my first job. One day last week, I saw one of my first-grade tutees on the playground by himself at about 8:00 at night. I saw him there, and I took him to eat and then took him home. I was worried that he was out there by himself and thought it was my responsibility to help him.

I knew if I got into the program I would have to change. I knew I was going to have to be an example to the younger kids. I am glad for this program, because it really did change my attitude, and my grades got better.

Anna Rosario, seventh grader
Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutor

My name is Anna Rosario. I am a seventh grader at Lincoln Middle School. I live with my mom and dad and two brothers. I have been in the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program for two years.

During my first year as a tutor, I tutored kindergartners. I taught them the ABCs, numbers and started them reading. This year, I am tutoring two first-grade students at Bancroft Elementary School. I tutor them in math, reading and vocabulary. The first-grade teacher gives me the assignments for the tutees. She tells me that the tutees have improved their vocabulary since I started working with them.

The tutees used to play around a lot. Since I started to tutor them, I have taught them that when it is time to work, it is time to work and when it is time to play, then you can play. I feel I have helped the tutees feel better about themselves. They used to feel they couldn't do the work. Now, they complete their work and they even ask for more. I have made the work fun for them.

Before I participated in the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, I didn't like to go to school. A few times, I even participated in "skipping parties." I almost got involved in a gang because I am at that age when you don't care what anybody says. My friends drank, and they would always say "get in, get in." I disrespected my teachers and even my mom. I had terrible grades. I made Fs in

Testimony - continued on page 7

Testimony - *continued from page 6*

school.

Today, now that I've been in the program, I want to come to school. I participate in sports. I try hard to do all my work. I respect my teachers. I am more mature about my work and other responsibilities. Now I make Bs and Cs. I get along with my mom now. It is a better picture of my life.

Mr. Adams, my teacher coordinator, has helped me because he has encouraged me to be more mature and responsible. He has told us that we have to be role models to the tutees.

Being part of the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program teaches you a valuable lesson. Before I became a tutor, I didn't do my work, and my teachers would get upset. Now that I am a tutor, I get upset when the tutees won't do their work. So I've learned that I should pay attention and do my work in class. Now I try hard to do my work. I can see that my teachers feel good about what I've done. And when I get an 'A' on my work I feel happy and that all that hard work wasn't for nothing.

I am glad I became a tutor in the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program because it made me see things differently. I have become more mature and a better student.

Courtney Adams, middle school teacher Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program teacher coordinator

My name is Courtney Adams. I am a teacher at Lincoln Multicultural Middle School. I have taught at Lincoln Middle School in the D.C. Public Schools for nine years. In January 1997, I became the teacher coordinator for the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program. This program was created by the Intercultural Development Research Association and has received outstanding recognition for its success. It is a cross-age tutoring dropout prevention program that takes middle and high school students who are considered at-risk of leaving school and places them as tutors of elementary students. The students tutor these younger children (called tutees) in core subjects such as reading, math and language arts.

The program gives tutors an opportunity to develop and improve their own academic skills while helping younger students. It also places them in positions of responsibility, which allows them to improve their attitudes toward school and demonstrate their value as students. School officials also learn to recognize that value.

The tutors are paid a minimum wage stipend to show how important their work as tutors is. The students tutor four days a week during their particular class period and meet one day to participate in a class where they discuss progress of their tutees and issues that come up as they tutor. They also participate in teambuilding and personal awareness activities.

During the past three years, we have had 65 tutors in the program. The students are selected for the program because (1) they are underachieving academically and/or (2) they are struggling with their attendance or school discipline. Teachers from Lincoln Middle School identify many of these students as being at-risk because they live in a community where there is a lot of gang activity, they have friends or family who use drugs, they have been in trouble with the law, or they have a history of truancy or poor grades. Not all of our students fit these specific criteria, but many of them experience one or more of these difficulties. Some of the students selected for the program are not presently having academic difficulties in school but were selected because of the community that surrounds them. They were selected to provide them with an alternative to some of the negative pressures that are in their environment.

The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program at Lincoln Middle School has proven very successful. Of the 48 students who participated in one or both of the first two years, at least 81.2 percent (39) are still in school. Traditionally, when the program has been in at a school for two or three years, the retention rate goes up to 98 percent.

We have students with truancy problems; one student in our program was absent more than 60 days from school the previous year. Because of it, she was held back one year. This year, she has missed only seven days. During this last eight-week period, she hasn't missed any days. She is passing all of her courses. I attribute most of the turn around, if not all, to her participation in the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program.

We have also had students with discipline problems, for example one young man was referred at least 15 times for discipline problems last year. This year he has only been referred three times.

Of the six students who were retained last year and selected for the program this year, so far five are on target to move to the next grade.

During this year, one student's mother came to see me to tell me how happy she was with her son being in the program. She spoke about how his attitude has changed at home and how much easier he is to talk to. His grade point average has gone from a 0.5 (below failing) to a 3.7 (B+).

As I have worked with the elementary schools, elementary teachers are constantly asking me when are they going to get more tutors. They love the consistency of the program. The tutors show up every day. They love the fact that the tutors are young and make a quick connection with the tutees. The tutees idolize them, they want to please the tutors and do well for them. Some elementary teachers have said they would rather have a Valued Youth tutor than a college student because they feel the positive outcomes have been much greater with the younger tutors. The tutors are also kids from the tutees' own communities.

The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program has been one of the most successful programs in our school over the past three years, and we hope to continue the program and even expand it next year. Although the primary focus of this program is dropout prevention, rigorous research has shown it has many positive impacts for students in academics, self concept, responsibility, attendance, family relationships as well as impacts for schools like keeping students in school, discipline, improved relationships with families and embracing a new philosophy that "all students are valuable, none is expendable."

The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, created by the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA), is an internationally-recognized cross-age tutoring program in schools across the United States, Puerto Rico, Great Britain and Brazil. Since its inception in San Antonio in 1984, the program has kept more than 5,500 students in school, young people who were previously at risk of dropping out. According to the Valued Youth creed, all students are valuable, none is expendable. This philosophy is helping more than 200 schools in 17 cities keep 98 percent of Valued Youth students in school, keeping these young people in the classroom and learning. For more than 15 years, IDRA and The Coca-Cola Foundation have worked together in a unique partnership that is making a visible difference in the lives of more than 74,500 children, families and educators. For more information, contact Linda Cantu, M.A., at IDRA (210-444-1710; contact@idra.org).

IDRA South Central Collaborative for Equity

More Students Served in Bilingual and ESL Programs But More LEP Students Assigned to Special Education

Roy Johnson, M.S. and Josie Danini Supik, M.A.

This summer, the Texas Education Agency released the latest data on limited English proficiency of Texas students. The Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) conducted a trend analysis of the data for the school years 1996-97 to 1998-99. The following is an outline of the key trends.

There was a 3.8 percent increase in the number of limited-English-proficient (LEP) students in Texas. The greatest increases (15 percent or more) of LEP students by region were found in Education Service Center Regions: 2 (Corpus Christi), 5 (Beaumont), 7 (Kilgore), 8 (Mount Pleasant), 10 (Richardson) and 11 (Fort Worth). The greatest decreases of LEP students by region were found in Education Service Center Regions: 17 (Lubbock) and 19 (El Paso).

There was a 6.17 percent increase in the number of students served in bilingual education and a 8.26 percent increase in the number served in English as a second language (ESL) programs from 1996-97 to 1998-99. It would be expected that the increase in LEP students would be proportional to an increase of students being served in bilingual education or ESL programs. This was usually the case except for Region 5 (Beaumont) where there was a decrease in the percentage of students served by such programs.

LEP Students Served in Texas by Region, Percent Change 1996-97 to 1998-99

Texas Region	LEP	Bilingual Education	ESL	Parent Denials	Special Education
1	-0.26%	3.68%	-9.10%	-8.56%	13.47%
2	18.28%	20.52%	29.83%	-0.26%	34.52%
3	5.53%	28.46%	1.47%	-19.19%	7.65%
4	1.86%	9.26%	5.66%	-32.47%	-6.63%
5	34.81%	-6.22%	5.42%	1863.41%	50.67%
6	13.61%	12.96%	14.95%	24.78%	41.14%
7	15.60%	21.92%	10.85%	50.35%	37.43%
8	24.49%	94.33%	4.54%	75.00%	52.54%
9	6.37%	21.00%	13.68%	-31.11%	24.00%
10	15.47%	14.05%	17.55%	100.92%	45.30%
11	21.31%	-2.98%	29.39%	56.91%	43.57%
12	11.73%	10.61%	16.23%	-5.48%	47.47%
13	-0.02%	14.57%	13.86%	-70.23%	-13.00%
14	-1.12%	-7.65%	5.00%	-73.91%	26.95%
15	3.18%	2.10%	9.78%	-15.25%	19.86%
16	-0.28%	-7.45%	-1.95%	26.08%	3.73%
17	-6.76%	-4.37%	-0.55%	-18.06%	0.61%
18	-4.40%	0.93%	-5.12%	-13.69%	12.31%
19	-6.39%	3.88%	-1.22%	19.70%	0.23%
20	-4.37%	-4.15%	2.04%	-2.12%	3.51%
Total	**3.80%**	**6.17%**	**8.26%**	**-3.70%**	**11.70%**

Source: Texas Education Agency, 1999.

The increase in students served in bilingual education and ESL programs is consistent with a decrease in parent denials (parents requesting their children not participate in these programs) from 1996-97 to 1998-99. Parent denials have consistently decreased over time and by region, ranging from less than 1 percent in Region 2 (Corpus Christi) to 74 percent in Region 14 (Abilene). Two increases are notable: Region 10 (Richardson) had a 101 percent increase in parent denials, and Region 5 (Beaumont) had a 1,863 percent increase in parent denials.

Of greatest concern is the increase and over-representation of LEP students in special education programs. There was a 11.7 percent increase in the number of LEP students assigned to such programs from 1996-97 to 1998-99. The increases range from 4 percent in Regions 16 (Amarillo) and 20 (San Antonio) to 53 percent in Region 8 (Mount Pleasant).

Only two of the 20 regions in Texas reported a decrease of LEP students in special education programs: Regions 4 (Houston) and 13 (Austin). Two regions reported less than a 1 percent increase: Regions 17 (Lubbock) and 19 (El Paso).

IDRA will continue to monitor the trends in bilingual education in Texas and across the nation and will continue its work to ensure that children who speak a language other than English benefit from quality instructional programs that capitalize on their language and culture.

Roy Johnson, M.S., is a senior research associate in the IDRA Division of Research and Evaluation. Josie Danini Supik, M.A., directs the IDRA Division of Research and Evaluation. Comments and questions may be directed to them via e-mail at contact@idra.org.

LEP Students in Bilingual Education Programs by Grade in Texas, 1996-97 to 1998-99

Grade Level	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	Percent Change
EE	194	224	155	-20.10%
PK	31,762	32,733	34,115	7.41%
KG	44,283	45,595	49,876	12.63%
1st	45,418	46,730	49,080	8.06%
2nd	39,882	42,027	43,937	10.17%
3rd	35,929	36,216	38,336	6.70%
4th	27,586	28,808	28,108	1.89%
5th	21,391	22,428	22,068	3.16%
6th	5,892	6,065	5,496	-6.72%
7th	582	412	439	-24.57%
8th	267	232	203	-23.97%
9th	160	148	115	-28.13%
10th	24	49	55	129.17%
11th	10	12	25	150.00%
12th	8	6	17	112.50%
Total	253,388	261,685	269,025	6.17%

Source: Texas Education Agency, 1999.

LEP Students Identified by Region in Texas, 1996-97 to 1998-99

Region	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	Percent Change
1	115,890	115,842	115,586	-0.26%
2	6,493	6,608	7,680	18.28%
3	2,530	2,696	2,670	5.53%
4	125,567	129,715	127,908	1.86%
5	2,255	2,567	3,040	34.81%
6	6,424	6,650	7,298	13.61%
7	7,476	7,998	8,642	15.60%
8	1,752	2,075	2,181	24.49%
9	1,084	1,142	1,153	6.37%
10	74,315	78,431	85,809	15.47%
11	29,674	32,463	35,998	21.31%
12	5,602	5,853	6,259	11.73%
13	19,638	17,952	19,635	-0.02%
14	1,425	1,465	1,409	-1.12%
15	3,809	3,695	3,930	3.18%
16	6,762	6,599	6,743	-0.28%
17	4,926	4,873	4,593	-6.76%
18	10,627	10,515	10,159	-4.40%
19	52,255	48,267	48,914	-6.39%
20	35,759	34,515	34,198	-4.37%
Total	514,263	519,921	533,805	3.80%

Source: Texas Education Agency, 1999.

***Educational Evaluation** - continued from page 3*

Learning from those who are doing it right, building capacity, and being accountable for our students' achievement is the path we must take.

Part of our work is to make sure that we stay on the right path. We have mileposts or landmarks that we use: baseline data (where are we starting), formative data (what is going on, who is doing what and why, what decisions are being made, and how do we know they are the right ones), and post-test data (did it make a difference). We have quantitative data (how many and how often), statistical tests, anovas and manovas, T-tests, and p values. We have qualitative data (so what did they say about it), focus group interviews, participant observations, case studies and ethnographies, content analyses, and triangulation (if three or more people saw the same thing, it must be true).

There are many methods and tools to uncover what is happening in our schools, some more sensitive and finely calibrated than others. You always need the right questions. After many years and much research about education, one question that needs to be revisited continuously is, "Who is accountable for any individual student?"

Last month, I was in a meeting with some luminarios in education and research. Each person has achieved great success in his or her field. We went around the table, asking everyone to tell the key factor that led to their success. Each person said the same thing. There had been at least one person in their lives who believed in them, one person they could go to, one person they could count on. That is really what accountability is, having young people count on us, count on our wisdom, compassion and humanity.

There is that word again: humanity. It brings us back to the beginning when I said the most important thing is our humanity, our connections to others and making a positive difference in people's lives.

There are many people across this country who have a common vision and an uncommon commitment to change the realities for our students, to be someone they can count on. Each of us is someone a child can count on. Remember the value you bring to students in your schools and the difference you have already made and will continue to make. This is how we can put the "value" in "evaluation."

Josie Danini Supik, M.A., directs the IDRA Division of Research and Evaluation. Comments and questions may be directed to her via e-mail at contact@idra.org.

Seventh Annual

IDRA *La Semana del Niño*

Early Childhood Educators Institute™

"Educating a New Generation"

Mark your calendar: **April 25-27, 2000 · San Antonio Airport Hilton**

Join us for the Seventh Annual IDRA *La Semana del Niño* Early Childhood Educators Institute as we celebrate and get ready to teach a new generation of children.

Plenary and Concurrent Sessions

The institute offers a valuable series of information-packed professional development concurrent sessions that are customized to the varied needs of early childhood educators and administrators. Information on any additional sessions will be available at the institute. The topics for this years' institute include innovative instructional strategies, information about policy issues, and the latest research.

School Visits

Take this opportunity to visit model early childhood centers. School visits provide you with the opportunity to share ideas while seeing them in action. Institute participants will travel to high-performing, high-minority schools in the San Antonio area that are effectively working with diverse learners. Two school visits (one each on Wednesday and Thursday) are available to the first 150 institute registrants on a first come, first served basis. Transportation will be provided.

Institute Sponsors

IDRA is pleased to bring you this Seventh Annual IDRA *La Semana del Niño* Early Childhood Educators Institute. Supporting IDRA projects include:

- IDRA *South Central Collaborative for Equity* (the equity assistance center that serves Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas) and
- *STAR Center* (the comprehensive regional assistance center that serves Texas via a collaboration of IDRA, the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin, and RMC Research Corporation).

Each of these IDRA projects provides specialized training and technical assistance to public schools. Information on how your campus can use these resources to improve instruction and assessment will be available at the institute and may also be obtained by calling IDRA at 210/444-1710 or by visiting IDRA's web site (www.idra.org).

Conference Topics...

Policy
- Early childhood education in the new century: Opportunities for all students
- The role of early childhood education in creating a nation of learners – reflecting on the national education goals

Literacy
- Including fantasy and imagination in the early childhood curriculum
- The language, the teacher and the child: Integrating a harmonious whole
- Creating literacy opportunities at home
- Effective instructional strategies for reluctant young readers

Social Development
- Children's literature: A tool to develop social skills in the early childhood classroom

Child Development
- Developing language, thoughts and values in the early childhood classroom

Multicultural Education
- The use of authentic literature in the classroom: Sharing our values

Curriculum
- Integrating fine arts in the early childhood program: A project approach

Play
- The child's right to play

Research
- Minority students: The latest research regarding their education and their opportunities
- Diversity in the classroom: Implications for the child

Classroom Management
- Managing learning centers

Hotel Information

The institute will be held at the San Antonio Airport Hilton. The hotel is offering a special rate of $95 per night for a single or double room (plus state and local taxes), based on availability. The hotel reservation deadline for the reduced rate is April 10, 2000. Call 1-800-HILTONS to make reservations. Be sure to reference the Annual IDRA *La Semana del Niño* Early Childhood Educators Institute in order to qualify for the special rate.

Seventh Annual IDRA *La Semana del Niño* Early Childhood Educators Institute™
Registration Form

YES I will attend the Seventh Annual IDRA *La Semana del Niño* Early Childhood Educators Institute on April 25-27, 2000. (Please use one form per person.)

Name ______________________________

School or Organization ______________________________

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Community Supports - continued from page 2

collected supporting public schools and objecting to the use of public funds for private schools. The activity was coordinated to coincide with a Texas Freedom Network's anti-voucher rally held in Austin on April 14. Representative Juan Solis graciously accepted his letters on the steps of the capitol while addressing an audience of nearly 300 people.

Coalition members then focused on keeping community attention on vouchers. Time was growing short as voucher measures threatened to appear any day in the state Senate or House of Representatives for consideration. Coalition members turned to the telephone as another way of communicating their concerns. The invitation to participate was spread throughout parent groups, teacher groups, religious groups, and others. While there is no way of calculating how many people actually made calls, the Coalition for Public Schools in Austin (which was also encouraging phone calls) reported that policy-makers were complaining of receiving a flood of calls in opposition to vouchers.

As a result, the young San Antonio Coalition for Equity and Excellence in Public Education was successful in helping others across the state defeat the "money machine's" voucher initiatives during this legislative session.

Where Does the Coalition Go From Here?

Members of the Coalition for Equity and Excellence in Public Education are enjoying their victory for public education, but the threat of vouchers still lurks in the shadows. Jeff Judson, president of the Texas Public Policy Foundation (an organization staunchly in favor of private school vouchers and funded in part by Leininger) said, "Voucher advocates will be assessing their approach, looking at their mistakes, figuring out what they did wrong and return next time with a more finely tuned strategy." The pro-public schools community coalition is already doing the same because the voucher debate will not end with this last session of the state legislature.

Already the playing field has changed. Florida's state legislature passed a statewide voucher initiative, the first in the country. The Milwaukee City Council is attempting to expand the voucher program there to allow all families, regardless of annual income, to participate. This is a total departure from the touted original intent of helping economically disadvantaged students. The Ohio Supreme Court ruled that the Cleveland voucher program is unconstitutional, and a federal judge recently issued an injunction stopping the program. Yet voucher proponents are continuing to operate the program pending an appeal.

While the debate over vouchers continues, the coalition will need to watch several events. For one, it is possible a court challenge in Florida will eventually reach the U.S. Supreme Court where the chief justices will be forced to make one decision affecting the entire country.

Community Supports - continued on page 12

HIGHLIGHTS OF RECENT IDRA ACTIVITIES

In June and July, IDRA worked with **9,395** teachers, administrators and parents through **102** training and technical assistance activities and **186** program sites in **12** states plus the United Kingdom. Topics included:

- ◆ Embracing Diversity in Schools
- ◆ Use of Two Languages in the Bilingual Classroom
- ◆ IDRA *Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program*
- ◆ Creating Successful Programs for Secondary Recent Immigrant Students
- ◆ Parent Leadership Development

Participating agencies and school districts included:

- ◇ Nogales Unified School District, Arizona
- ◇ Houston Independent School District (ISD), Texas
- ◇ Polasky County School District, Arkansas
- ◇ New Orleans Parish, Louisiana
- ◇ Columbus ISD, Texas

Activity Snapshot

After being found in violation of the law related to racial harassment, one district faced having $250,000 in federal funds withheld from it. The IDRA *South Central Collaborative for Equity* provided technical assistance to the district in board policy development and training in prejudice reduction for the board, staff, students and parents. A model is being developed and refined for use with other districts experiencing similar problems. The South Central Collaborative for Equity is the equity assistance center funded by the U.S. Department of Education to help schools in Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Texas to provide equitable school settings that ensure full inclusion and participation by all students and their parents regardless of race, sex or national origin.

Regularly, IDRA staff provides services to:

- ◆ public school teachers
- ◆ parents
- ◆ administrators
- ◆ other decision makers in public education

Services include:

- ◇ training and technical assistance
- ◇ evaluation
- ◇ serving as expert witnesses in policy settings and court cases
- ◇ publishing research and professional papers, books, videos and curricula

For information on IDRA services for your school district or other group, contact IDRA at 210/444-1710.

Community Coalition - continued from page 11

Second, we can expect Texas voucher proponents, those with all the money, to try to influence several state races in an attempt to dislodge Pete Laney as Speaker of the House and other anti-voucher policy-makers and thus receive enough deciding votes to pass a voucher bill.

Voucher proponents may push for measures for a tax credit for families who send their children to private schools and a franchise tax rebate for businesses that donate to private schools. They may be wearing different "clothes," but these are still voucher programs because they use tax money to pay private school tuition.

What Can the Coalition Do to Stop Vouchers in the Future?

Since the power of the coalition rests with its people and not its money, the coalition will work to expand its network to reach a broader sector of the population. New organizations and individuals are being encouraged to join the coalition, including representatives from additional school districts, religious groups, private schools, minority groups, and businesses.

Additional media relations need to be developed as an outlet for articles and information about vouchers, particularly to keep San Antonians informed about the status of the voucher efforts in Milwaukee and Florida. An e-mail information network needs be developed to inform coalition members and interested citizens of pending legislation or opposition activities. The coalition might consider hosting a statewide voucher conference and invite different coalitions and associations to share their ideas and strategies and to determine how we might all work better together.

The coalition will certainly continue its parent training programs and encourage other school districts and school board members to take a more active role in opposing vouchers. Above all, the coalition needs to maintain a single-minded focus to oppose the use of public money for private schooling.

We owe thanks and appreciation to all of the groups and individuals who came together as the Coalition for Equity and Excellence in Public Education. It is truly an organization that made a difference in the fight against vouchers.

Zane Chalfant is the former executive director of the Texas Parent Teachers Association (PTA). Prior to this, he served 21 years as an officer in the U.S. Air Force, was the business manager for an engineering consulting firm, and directed a non-profit organization providing training and job placement assistance to people in the community. He is a member of both the Coalition for Public Schools and the Coalition for Equity and Excellence in Public Education.

Upcoming Events

Every Child is a Soaring Star

11th Annual National Dropout Prevention Network Conference

December 4 to 9, 1999
Austin, Texas

More than 100 sessions on:

- ★ dropout prevention
- ★ alternative education
- ★ service learning
- ★ latest technology
- ★ best applications

For registration information,
call 231-933-3962.
For exhibiting information,
call 864-656-2599.
The conference hotel is the Renaissance Austin Hotel (512-343-2626; www.renaissancehotels.com).

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IDRA Newsletter

ISSN 1069-5672 *Volume XXVI, No. 9 October 1999*

Attrition Rates in Texas Public High Schools Still High

Roy Johnson, M.S.

Inside this Issue:

- ✧ **Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program gets results**
- ✧ **Dropout and attrition rates worsen in Texas**
- ✧ **Immigrant education collaborative**
- ✧ **Early childhood education event**
- ✧ **National dropout prevention conference**

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In Texas over the last 13 years, the percent of students of all races and ethnicities lost from public school enrollment has worsened. It was 33 percent in 1986. Today, it is 42 percent.

The latest attrition study by the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) shows that 53 percent of Hispanic students and 48 percent of Black students were lost from public school enrollment, compared to 31 percent of White students, between 1995-96 and 1998-99 in Texas. The attrition rate is the percent of students lost from enrollment

"Schools, communities and policymakers can and must work together to ensure that we provide quality education for *all* students," commented Dr. María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel, IDRA's executive director. "We cannot remain in denial about the severity of the dropout problem and refuse to take the actions necessary to keep students in school," she said.

To follow are the major findings of IDRA's latest annual attrition study, which presents data for the 1998-99 school year by statewide total, by county, and by race and ethnicity. This article also restates recommendations from the IDRA policy brief entitled, *Missing: Texas Youth – Dropout and Attrition Rates in Texas Public High Schools* that was released earlier this year. The article also looks at dropout information reported by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) including the new "leaver" record system.

Findings of IDRA's Latest Attrition Analyses

Two of every five students from the freshman class of 1995-96 left school prior to their 1998-99 graduation from Texas public high schools. IDRA research shows that 42 percent of the state's 1995-96 freshman class were lost from public school enrollment by 1998-99, the same percentage of students lost between 1994-95 and 1997-98 (see box on the next page).

Though the attrition rate has remained relatively stable over the last few years, the rate is 27 percent higher than in 1985-86 when the attrition rate was 33 percent.

Longitudinally, the attrition rate in Texas public schools has increased by nine percentage points from 1985-86 (33 percent) to 1997-98 (42 percent). Numerically, 151,779 students were lost from public high school enrollment during the period of 1995-96 to 1998-99 as compared to 86,276 during the period of 1982-83 to 1985-86.

The 1985-86 school year marked the initial year that IDRA conducted the state's first comprehensive assessment of the number and percent of Texas public school students who are lost from public school enrollment prior to graduation. Thirteen years following the release of its first comprehensive report in October 1986, IDRA continues to document the number and percent of the state's students who leave school prior to graduation. IDRA advocates dropout prevention and accurate dropout data collection and reporting by school districts and the state education agency.

The latest study by IDRA reveals that

Attrition Rates – *continued on page 2*

LONGITUDINAL ATTRITION RATES IN TEXAS PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS, 1985-86 TO 1998-99

RACE-ETHNICITY GROUP	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1991-92	1992-93	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	PERCENT CHANGE* FROM 1985-86 TO 1998-99
Native American	45	39	37	47	39	40	39	42	44	43	42	25	-44
Asian/Pacific Islander	33	30	28	23	22	21	21	18	18	20	21	19	-42
Black	34	38	39	37	38	39	43	50	51	51	49	48	41
White	27	26	24	20	19	22	25	30	31	32	31	31	15
Hispanic	45	46	49	48	48	48	49	51	53	54	53	53	18
Total	**33**	**34**	**33**	**31**	**31**	**34**	**36**	**40**	**42**	**43**	**42**	**42**	**27**

* *Rounded to nearest whole number.* Figures calculated by IDRA from the Texas Education Agency *Fall Membership Survey* data.

Rates were not calculated for the 1990-91 and 1993-94 school years due to unavailability of data.

Attrition Rates *– continued from page 1*

attrition rates continue to be alarmingly high. Major findings of IDRA's 1998-99 attrition study indicate the following.

- From 1985-86 to 1998-99 more than **1.3 million students have been lost** from Texas public schools due to attrition.
- **Two of every five students** enrolled in the ninth grade in Texas public schools during the 1995-96 school year failed to reach the 12th grade in 1998-99. An estimated 151,779 students, or about 42 percent of the 1995-96 freshman class, were lost from public school enrollment by 1998-99.
- **Black students and Hispanic students were more likely than White students to be lost** from public school enrollment in 1998-99. Fifty-three percent of Hispanic students and 48 percent of Black students were lost from public school enrollment, compared to 31 percent of White students. Hispanic students were 1.7 times more likely than White students to leave school before graduation while Black students were 1.5 times more likely than White students to leave school before completing high school.
- From 1997-98 to 1998-99, **three racial-ethnic groups had a decline in attrition rates.** Native American students had a decline from 42 percent to 25 percent, Asian/Pacific Islander students had a decline from 21 percent to 19 percent, and Black students had a decline from 49 percent to 48 percent. The attrition rates for White students and Hispanic students remained constant, 31 percent and 53 percent, respectively.
- **More males than females were lost** from public high school enrollment. Between 1995-96 and 1998-99, 45 percent of males were lost from public high school enrollment, compared to 38 percent of females.
- **The percent of students lost from public high school enrollment has increased by**

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The Intercultural Development Research Association *(IDRA)* is a non-profit organization with a 501(c)(3) tax exempt status. The purpose of the organization is to disseminate information concerning equality of educational opportunity.

The *IDRA Newsletter* (ISSN 1069-5672, © 1999) serves as a vehicle for communication with educators, school board members, decision-makers, parents, and the general public concerning the educational needs of all children in Texas and across the United States.

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Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program: Still Getting Great Results

Josie Danini Supik, M.A.

> **"When I walked in the room, they would have these big smiles, and they would all sit up a little straighter in their chairs because I was there...Being a tutor encouraged me to get up and go to school every day."**
>
> **– a Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutor in McAllen, Texas**

This past school year began a new initiative of the IDRA Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program. In July 1998, The Coca-Cola Foundation awarded the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) a new grant to take the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program into the next millennium.

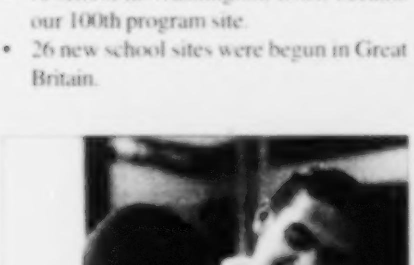
Beginning in 1984, with support from Coca-Cola USA to IDRA, the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program has given thousands of Valued Youth a chance to be special, to contribute and to achieve.

In 1990, The Coca-Cola Foundation awarded a five-year grant to IDRA to take the program to 10 elementary and secondary schools around the country. IDRA exceeded its commitment by opening the program in 70 schools in 18 cities.

In 1995, The Coca-Cola Foundation provided support for IDRA to expand the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program into 10 new secondary and elementary schools over three years. Again, IDRA exceeded its commitment: the program was in 38 new schools in the United States, Puerto Rico and Great Britain. In June of 1998, the end of the three-year initiative, the program was in an unprecedented 128 schools, reaching more than 4,000 tutors and tutees that school year alone.

During this last initiative, The Coca-Cola Foundation and IDRA achieved the following:

- A school in Washington, D.C., became our 100th program site.
- 26 new school sites were begun in Great Britain.
- Four new school sites were begun in Puerto Rico.
- 10 new school sites were begun in Houston.
- 10.7 million people learned about the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program through national and international media coverage, including NBC, *USA Today*, BBC, and *Los Angeles Times*.
- Presentations were made at events of national significance, including the President's Summit for America's Future held in April 1997 with more than 3,000 participants.
- Two new school sites in Atlanta and five new school sites in Chicago were begun in 1997-98.
- Over 98 percent of our Valued Youth tutors stayed in school.



A tutor and tutee work together in Chicago Public Schools

Since 1984, more than 74,500 students, parents, teachers and administrators have been impacted by the program. This impact has been achieved, in large part, by preserving the program's integrity, keeping true to the program's vision: "The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program is in the vanguard of education by creating a structure for the valuing of students and families and is a powerful instrument for amplifying their voices, their dignity and their worth." The program's creed is: *All students are valuable, none is expendable.*

In the 1998-99 school year, the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program was in 171 secondary and elementary schools in 24 school districts and 20 cities in the United States, Puerto Rico and Great Britain. More than 1,000 tutors and 3,000 tutees benefitted from the program this year alone. This includes 66 elementary and secondary schools in Great Britain (Birmingham, Greenwich and Kent); four schools in San Juan, Puerto Rico; three schools in Washington, D.C.; two schools in Atlanta; and five schools in Chicago.

Rigorous Evaluation

The evaluation and monitoring activities of the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program sites continue to be as rigorous and comprehensive as ever. Each year, the evaluation design has been reviewed by staff with feedback from the sites. Modifications are made to increase the efficiency, effectiveness, and overall quality of the evaluation.

In addition to the pre- and post-test surveys, IDRA has also committed its own resources to effectively evaluate this program, including in-depth interviews and regular monitoring and on-site observations. The evaluation design of this program is a model for dropout prevention and service-learning programs across the country.

1998-99 Program Findings

Student Tutor Profiles: Demographics

During the last school year, slightly more than half of the tutors were male. Tutors ranged from sixth to 12th grade. Most of the tutors (88.4 percent) were Hispanic; 10.7 percent were African American. Almost all of the tutors (96.1 percent) were eligible for the free or reduced price lunch program (a poverty indicator).

One out of three tutors were previously retained once in grade; six tutors had been retained more than three times. The tutors' average age was 15. One out of two tutors had a mother or father who was born in Mexico.

One out of three tutors had changed schools previously. Of those, two out of three had changed schools once or twice. However, some tutors had changed schools seven, eight, nine, even 10 times.

Getting Results - continued on page 4

Great Results - *continued from page 3*

Student Tutor Profiles: Peers

Two out of three tutors expanded their circle of friendships by the end of the school year; their fellow tutors had become new friends. At the beginning of the school year, two out of five tutors had friends who had dropped out of school, and one out of five had a brother or sister who had dropped out. However, less than one out of 10 tutors say they had ever considered dropping out of school. *At the end of the school year, four out of five tutors felt they had a place in their school, that they "belonged."*

Teacher Coordinators' Perceptions of Tutors

The teacher coordinators were asked to evaluate the tutors at the beginning and end of the school year. They evaluated the tutors in 15 areas, from self-concept to academic achievement. Their pre- and post-test ratings of tutors increased significantly in all areas: self-concept; disciplinary record; academic achievement; attendance; interest in class and school; future goals; ability to socialize with schoolmates; ability to socialize into their school environment; relationship with their parents, teachers, administrators and counselors; their desire to graduate; and hygiene and dress.

Elementary School Teachers' Perceptions of Tutees

Elementary school teachers were also surveyed at the beginning and end of the school year for their perceptions of the tutees. They were asked to evaluate the students who were tutored in nine areas ranging from interest in class to academic achievement. This is the primary means used to evaluate whether or not the tutors had an impact on the children that they tutored throughout the year.

Other methods such as grades and achievement test scores for the older tutees have been used. But, it is difficult to assess pre- and post-test changes in tutees unless the same students were tutored throughout the year. Given that this is usually not the case, any such assessment is deemed inappropriate and unreliable.

According to the elementary school teachers' survey, all of the survey areas for the tutees (self-concept, disciplinary record, academic achievement, attendance, interest in class and school, ability to socialize with schoolmates and into their school environment, and their hygiene and dress) increased significantly after the tutoring.

Quick Facts about the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program

Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutors improved their academic achievement test scores significantly in reading and mathematics after participating in the program. Their self-concept also improved in all areas: behavior, intellectual and school status, physical appearance, anxiety, popularity, and happiness and satisfaction.

Of 1,066 Valued Youth tutors in 1998-99, only 10 dropped out of school, resulting in a dropout rate of 0.9 percent.

Over half of the tutors spoke Spanish as their first language, and most spoke a language other than English at home.

> **"The best thing about tutoring is being able to give someone something. I actually taught someone else something, and it felt good."**
>
> **– Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutor in Washington, D.C.**

Tutors took field trips to local universities, museums, banks and hospitals.

Tutors interacted with guest speakers including policy-makers, school administrators, hospital staff, judges and law enforcement personnel.

The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program began in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paolo, Brazil, this spring. "The great insight of this project is that it systematizes a way of working with children considered failures and turns them around in very short time," comments a teacher at Ruy Barbosa Elementary School in Rio de Janeiro.

– Intercultural Development Research Association, *1998-99 Stewardship Report*

Parents' Perceptions of Tutors

At the end of the school year, tutors' parents were surveyed about their impressions of the tutoring experience on their children. The survey was completed by 350 parents (33 percent). The survey is provided in both Spanish and English; most of the interviews were conducted in person.

Most (73.0 percent) of the parents reported a positive change in their child's attitude and behavior regarding school. They attributed the changes to their involvement in the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program – changes that included greater responsibility and maturity, greater interest in school, and higher self-esteem. They also noted better grades and self-discipline. Parents reported a positive change in the home with their children helping them more than usual, specifically doing household chores, working on homework, and increasing communication with them around personal problems and school.

Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program Tutors

IDRA conducts in-depth interviews of a sample of tutors at the end of the year. Below are examples of two case studies. (The student's names have been changed for privacy.)

Brenda's Story

Brenda is an outgoing student who likes to laugh. As a senior at Options in Education High School in McAllen, Texas, 18-year-old Brenda has just finished her second year as an IDRA Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutor. Because Brenda's mother was only able to complete up to the fifth grade, she encourages Brenda and her two younger brothers to graduate.

Brenda explains that she did not always care about school. "For a long time, the only point to going to school was to get it over with." Brenda believes she has changed since becoming a Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutor. School is more important to her, she feels that it now has a purpose and

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is "more uplifting." Because Brenda has helped other children, she sees her own brothers as more children she can help.

Brenda finds that she is motivated to do well in other areas of her life: "Being a tutor has gotten me to join other clubs too. I'm in the student government and the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and I have a mentor." By joining clubs, she has gained more confidence.

For one hour a day, four days a week, Brenda has been tutoring day care students and first-grade students. She has been teaching them colors, numbers and speaking English: "When I first came to the classroom, the kids didn't understand when I greeted them in English. Now, they speak to me in English all of the time. I know that I had something to do with it."

Brenda will always remember her tutees: "When I walked in the room, they would have these big smiles, and they would all sit up a little straighter in their chairs because I was there."

The teacher coordinator for the school's Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program also made a big impact on Brenda. The teacher was always encouraging her to apply to college and fill out financial aid forms.

When asked what she will remember most about being a tutor, Brenda said: "I'll remember all of the commitment and effort we put into it. I know that the kids I tutored will go on with their education. *Those* kids aren't staying behind."

Brenda's mother is also involved in the tutees' lives: "My mom gets excited when the kids make a good grade on a test. She won't let me forget anything about my kids, she even gets them cards for the holidays!"

The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program has also made a positive difference in the financial situation of Brenda's family. She has been able to help her mother pay the bills and has been able to buy some of her own clothes.

Brenda hopes that because she was always there for her tutees, they will know that if they ask for help, someone will always be there. Brenda knows now what her teachers feel like. She understands the teachers' point of view.

Brenda thinks high school would have been boring without the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program. Brenda does not know if she would have graduated from high school without the program: "Being a tutor encouraged me to get up and go to school everyday." She adds: "I really love this program. I think everyone in this school and the world should have it!"

Rich's Story

Rich is an outgoing student with ambitious goals for his future. As a ninth-grade student at Madison High School in Houston, Rich has just completed his first year as a Coca-Cola Valued Youth tutor. Rich's family is very supportive of his participation in the program and encourages his dream of getting a college education. Rich plans to attend college at either Notre Dame or Georgia Tech where he would like to study art. Rich hopes that his passion for drawing will help him to become a professional cartoonist.

For one hour a day, four days a week, Rich has been tutoring fourth- and fifth-grade students. Rich helps the tutees with a variety of subjects including reading, spelling and math. Rich says that he spends the

Great Results - continued on page 20

Overview of the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program

In 1984, the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) designed, developed and implemented the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program with funding from Coca-Cola USA. It has grown from 10 schools in San Antonio to more than 200 schools in the continental United States, Puerto Rico, England and Brazil.

The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program goals include

- reducing dropout rates;
- enhancing students' basic academic skills;
- strengthening students' perceptions of self and school;
- reducing student disciplinary action referrals and absenteeism; and
- strengthening school-home-community partnerships to increase the level of support available to students considered at risk of dropping out of school.

Seven important tenets express the philosophy of the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program.

1. All students can learn.
2. The school values all students.
3. All students can actively contribute to their own education and to the education of others.
4. All students, parents and teachers have the right to participate fully in creating and maintaining excellent schools.
5. Excellence in schools contributes to individual and collective economic growth, stability and advancement.
6. Commitment to educational excellence is created by including students, parents and teachers in setting goals, making decisions, monitoring progress and evaluating outcomes.
7. Students, parents and teachers must be provided extensive, consistent support in ways that allow students to learn, teachers to teach, and parents to be involved.

Instructional strategies:

- classes for student tutors
- tutoring sessions
- field trips
- role modeling
- student recognition

Support strategies:

- curriculum
- coordination
- staff enrichment
- parent involvement
- program evaluation

The key to the program's success is in **valuing students who are considered at risk of dropping out of school and sustaining their efforts with effective, coordinated strategies.**

For more information contact IDRA at 210-444-1710 or contact@idra.org.

Lessons Learned, Lessons Shared: An Excerpt

Pam McCollum, Ph.D.

Editor's Note: "Lessons Learned, Lessons Shared: Texas Immigrant Education Collaborative" was published by the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) in December 1998. It fills a void by showing educators what is necessary to develop and maintain appropriate programs for secondary level recent immigrant students. The monograph shares the lessons learned from participation in IDRA's Texas Immigrant Education Collaborative (TIEC) project in two sites – a middle school in Houston, with an international immigrant student population, and a border high school in El Paso, with a primarily homogenous Mexican immigrant population. The TIEC was funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The following is an excerpt from the concluding chapter.

The story of the Texas Immigrant Education Collaborative (TIEC) project presented here does not chronicle all project initiatives. This monograph presents descriptions of select project initiatives, analyzes factors that enhanced or detracted from successful implementation, and reviews the lessons learned from our participation in the TIEC project. Another aim of this document is to provide educators with basic information and resources on immigrant education to facilitate the implementation and maintenance of successful programs for immigrant students.

Many documents that chronicle the course of educational innovations conclude by providing inventories of program characteristics that should be present in successful programs. Barth (1990) refers to such approaches as "list logic," i.e., if one has all of the things on the list, one will have a successful program, school, administrator, etc. This document purposely avoids such an approach. Instead, it shares the *process of how* certain TIEC program initiatives were implemented and maintained. This shows how programs came to have particular characteristics given a particular context.

While avoiding the "list logic" or recipe approach to designing programs for recent immigrant students, a discussion of how to proceed in the future given our lessons learned is in order. Recommendations for future collaboratives on the education of immigrant students are given in the following section.

The spark that ignited the excitement and advocacy for improving the education of recent immigrant students in the TIEC project was the opportunity the project afforded educators to affect change. The support provided by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation gave educators the opportunity to improve their schools from within. In most cases, teachers had good ideas about what they wanted to do to improve their students' education. What they lacked was time to interact and a forum in which to build advocacy for immigrant students.

Special programs need to be built into the district structure from the beginning. Absence of district support and advocacy of special programs slows progress.

Teachers had clear ideas about what was best for their own education. Staff development was much more successful when teachers had the freedom to select the topics they wanted to study. Study groups, where several topics of interest were explored, enabled teachers to survey new teaching techniques and select one to focus on in depth. This approach led to a "buy-in" on the part of teachers and ensured they were getting what they *needed* and *wanted*. All too often, traditional staff development satisfies neither of those criteria.

The TIEC project provided a forum where teachers interacted with each other as well as with outside consultants and volunteers to solve their problems. IDRA's model for change engaged project participants in action research to improve the experience of immigrant students at their campus. **Project participants assessed their situation, created a vision and planned how the vision would be realized.**

One lesson learned was the slow nature of programmatic change. This type of project calls for a more realistic expectation about *when* changes should be expected and what is realistic to expect at different stages. Change occurs on many levels, not just in student test scores. **Expecting rapid changes in recent immigrant students' test scores is an unrealistic expectation given the length of time that is required for second language acquisition to take place.** In addition, in the case of older students, many have completed a fewer number of years of schooling in their country of origin than required here. They also may not know how to read.

Common sense dictates that students should learn to read and calculate before grade level curriculum and state-level accountability testing becomes a concern. **For this reason, early program results from standardized tests need to be seen in a different light. The focus should be on documenting growth using multiple indicators and describing the process that contributes to that growth.** Evaluation mechanisms need to be built into educational interventions. These mechanisms should evaluate various dimensions of change in order to reflect accurately the type of effect a program is having on a campus.

A successful early outcome of a program for immigrant students, for example, would be a change in the number of students eligible to take the TAAS test the third year after the implementation of a newcomers center. Teaching non-English-speaking high school students enough English to take the TAAS should be acknowledged as an index of success.

Strategies are needed to speed programmatic change and improve the running of collaborative multipartner educational projects. Perhaps the factor that retarded project progress the most was the bureaucracy of large urban school districts. From the project's perspective, the simple task of tracking students across years of the project

Lessons Learned - continued on page 17

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- Creating literacy opportunities at home
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Child Development
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Attrition Rates - continued from page 2

27.3 percent between the 1985-86 school year (33 percent) and the 1998-99 school year (42 percent). The number of students lost through attrition has increased from about 86,000 in 1985-86 to about 152,000 in 1998-99.

- **Hispanic students made up the highest percentage of students lost** from public high school enrollment in 1998-99. About half (50.1 percent) of the students lost from school enrollment were Hispanic. White students comprised 39.1 percent of the students lost from enrollment and Black students comprised 16.8 percent.

Enrollment and attrition data for the 1995-96 and 1998-99 school years are categorized by race and ethnicity in the box below. Statewide and county attrition rates are presented for the three major race and ethnicity groups on Pages 9 and 10.

TEA's Dropout and School Leaver Report

Texas public schools report dropout information to TEA through the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS). Under the Texas accountability system, district accountability ratings are based on a combined consideration of district and particular student group performances on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), attendance rates and dropout rates.

House Bill 1010, which became law in 1986, requires that TEA collect and calculate longitudinal and annual dropout rates for students in grades seven through 12. The bill mandates that the state reduce the statewide longitudinal dropout rate to not more that 5 percent of the total student population in grades seven through 12 by the year 2000.

The state definition of a dropout is:

> A student is identified as a dropout if the individual is absent without an approved excuse or documented transfer and does not return to school by the fall of the following school year, or if he or she completes the school year but fails to re-enroll the following school year (TEA, 1998).

According to TEA, the dropout rate has declined steadily for almost a decade. The reported annual dropout rate was 1.6

Attrition Rates - continued on page 11

1995-96 AND 1998-99 ENROLLMENT AND 1998-99 ATTRITION IN TEXAS

Race-Ethnicity and Gender	1995-96 9th Grade Enrollment	1998-99 12th Grade Enrollment	1995-96 9-12th Grade Enrollment	1998-99 9-12th Grade Enrollment	1998-99 Expected 12th Grade Enrollment	Students Lost to Attrition	Attrition Rate
Native American	**794**	**891**	**2,333**	**3,497**	**1,190**	**299**	**25**
Male	385	422	1,171	1,768	581	159	27
Female	409	469	1,162	1,729	609	140	23
Asian/Pacific Islander	**7,272**	**7,037**	**25,822**	**30,949**	**8,717**	**1,680**	**19**
Male	3,799	3,512	13,217	15,902	4,571	1,059	23
Female	3,473	3,525	12,605	15,047	4,146	621	15
Black	**50,395**	**28,126**	**139,112**	**148,003**	**53,652**	**25,526**	**48**
Male	26,410	13,463	69,201	74,557	28,454	14,991	53
Female	23,985	14,663	69,911	73,446	25,198	10,535	42
White	**149,931**	**109,673**	**489,175**	**514,998**	**157,851**	**48,178**	**31**
Male	78,571	55,599	251,026	264,651	82,836	27,237	33
Female	71,360	54,074	238,149	250,347	75,015	20,941	28
Hispanic	**127,016**	**66,241**	**333,168**	**373,378**	**142,337**	**76,096**	**53**
Male	67,798	32,873	171,348	191,736	75,865	42,992	57
Female	59,218	33,368	161,820	181,642	66,472	33,104	50
All Groups	**335,409**	**211,968**	**989,611**	**1,070,825**	**363,747**	**151,779**	**42**
Male	176,963	105,869	505,963	548,614	192,307	86,438	45
Female	158,446	106,099	483,648	522,211	171,440	65,341	38

Figures calculated by IDRA from the Texas Education Agency *Fall Membership Survey* data. IDRA's 1998-99 attrition study involved the analysis of enrollment figures for public high school students in the ninth grade during 1995-96 school year and enrollment figures for 12th grade students in 1998-99. This period represents the time span when ninth grade students would be enrolled in school prior to graduation. The enrollment data for special school districts (military schools, state schools, and charter schools) were excluded from the analyses since they are likely to have unstable enrollments and/or lack a tax base to support school programs.

Source: Intercultural Development Research Association.

ATTRITION RATES IN TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS BY COUNTY AND BY RACE-ETHNICITY, 1998-99

COUNTY NAME	ATTRITION RATES[1] BLACK	WHITE	HISPANIC	TOTAL
ANDERSON	52	32	73	40
ANDREWS	19	21	44	31
ANGELINA	18	23	42	25
ARANSAS	57	42	54	45
ARCHER	*	24	**	22
ARMSTRONG	*	19	50	21
ATASCOSA	**	12	39	29
AUSTIN	49	24	53	33
BAILEY	58	23	49	38
BANDERA	100	36	43	38
BASTROP	49	33	56	41
BAYLOR	100	17	70	25
BEE	47	28	52	43
BELL	43	27	47	34
BEXAR	46	28	50	44
BLANCO	50	15	53	43
BORDEN	*	41	33	41
BOSQUE	41	19	43	24
BOWIE	40	24	54	30
BRAZORIA	49	42	58	47
BRAZOS	53	26	56	40
BREWSTER	*	29	24	27
BRISCOE	100	**	73	21
BROOKS	50	54	47	47
BROWN	46	34	45	36
BURLESON	33	28	44	32
BURNET	50	39	57	43
CALDWELL	49	36	56	46
CALHOUN	71	42	71	57
CALLAHAN	100	27	24	27
CAMERON	65	34	56	55
CAMP	16	27	84	30
CARSON	*	4	20	5
CASS	20	20	51	20
CASTRO	7	**	28	19
CHAMBERS	36	27	36	29
CHEROKEE	24	33	67	35
CHILDRESS	35	16	23	20
CLAY	*	23	47	24
COCHRAN	20	19	45	36
COKE	92	20	49	46
COLEMAN	**	13	15	13
COLLIN	44	28	45	31
COLLINGSWORTH	29	**	40	15
COLORADO	44	17	60	33
COMAL	53	33	56	40
COMANCHE	*	15	43	25
CONCHO	*	5	15	11
COOKE	56	28	66	32
CORYELL	45	30	42	35
COTTLE	48	11	19	18
CRANE	29	18	36	27
CROCKETT	*	15	19	19
CROSBY	39	0	38	28
CULBERSON	*	52	30	33
DALLAM	**	19	42	25
DALLAS	51	32	64	47
DAWSON	**	12	42	30
DEAF SMITH	**	8	48	35
DELTA	23	20	0	37

COUNTY NAME	ATTRITION RATES[1] BLACK	WHITE	HISPANIC	TOTAL
DENTON	44	34	54	37
DEWITT	65	19	50	35
DICKENS	*	**	7	**
DIMMIT	**	26	34	32
DONLEY	12	18	38	18
DUVAL	*	42	29	30
EASTLAND	33	26	39	28
ECTOR	49	32	54	42
EDWARDS	*	32	17	26
ELLIS	44	35	58	40
EL PASO	41	26	43	40
ERATH	44	29	61	35
FALLS	43	34	55	41
FANNIN	37	24	56	27
FAYETTE	39	20	57	28
FISHER	100	10	54	28
FLOYD	47	28	45	39
FOARD	**	**	48	7
FORT BEND	46	33	58	42
FRANKLIN	46	25	48	29
FREESTONE	17	22	36	21
FRIO	100	**	37	32
GAINES	47	31	43	37
GALVESTON	48	35	60	41
GARZA	50	24	34	29
GILLESPIE	60	27	57	35
GLASSCOCK	*	22	59	38
GOLIAD	14	26	42	30
GONZALES	56	30	46	40
GRAY	31	19	31	22
GRAYSON	45	33	58	36
GREGG	44	29	61	35
GRIMES	55	34	62	46
GUADALUPE	51	36	62	48
HALE	48	18	48	38
HALL	10	**	47	26
HAMILTON	*	20	52	24
HANSFORD	*	11	38	20
HARDEMAN	**	9	56	18
HARDIN	36	28	41	29
HARRIS	49	32	60	46
HARRISON	45	39	70	11
HARTLEY	*	19	100	30
HASKELL	25	2	27	10
HAYS	52	34	61	46
HEMPHILL	100	26	75	50
HENDERSON	22	29	62	31
HIDALGO	30	22	51	50
HILL	49	26	59	34
HOCKLEY	19	4	38	21
HOOD	100	35	51	36
HOPKINS	18	24	46	25
HOUSTON	46	26	76	36
HOWARD	50	27	53	38
HUDSPETH	*	12	34	29
HUNT	55	30	62	36
HUTCHINSON	11	19	40	21
IRION	*	17	41	23
JACK	25	17	11	18
JACKSON	20	22	48	30

[1] Calculated by: (1) dividing the high school enrollment in the end year by the high school enrollment in the base year; (2) multiplying the results from Calculation 1 by the ninth grade enrollment in the base year; (3) subtracting the results from Calculation 2 from the 12th grade enrollment in the end year; and (4) dividing the results of Calculation 3 by the result of Calculation 2. The attrition rate results (percentages) were rounded to the nearest whole number.

** = Attrition rate is less than zero (0).

* = The necessary data are unavailable to calculate the attrition rate.

Attrition Rates in Texas Public Schools by County and by Race-Ethnicity, 1998-99 (continued)

County Name	Attrition Rates[1]			
	Black	White	Hispanic	Total
Jasper	37	28	71	32
Jeff Davis	100	57	40	57
Jefferson	52	29	64	43
Jim Hogg	•	43	27	28
Jim Wells	68	13	37	32
Johnson	54	40	60	43
Jones	3	22	31	23
Karnes	35	28	41	36
Kaufman	58	41	60	45
Kendall	0	38	66	44
Kent	0	27	**	7
Kerr	6	35	61	42
Kimble	•	45	65	51
King	•	46	•	47
Kinney	100	13	37	31
Kleberg	60	18	62	53
Knox	**	20	41	27
Lamar	28	30	38	29
Lamb	19	12	43	30
Lampasas	53	23	57	32
La Salle	91	30	46	46
Lavaca	48	14	66	23
Lee	47	21	64	35
Leon	16	32	42	31
Liberty	35	34	70	38
Limestone	17	27	44	27
Lipscomb	•	11	11	12
Live Oak	64	25	49	38
Llano	•	39	62	41
Lubbock	30	18	46	30
Lynn	29	24	16	20
Madison	42	29	54	35
Marion	38	40	40	39
Martin	**	9	57	34
Mason	**	9	28	13
Matagorda	38	24	50	35
Maverick	•	39	42	42
McCulloch	44	15	41	24
McLennan	43	33	59	40
McMullen	•	35	34	33
Medina	24	27	46	37
Menard	•	42	19	31
Midland	45	21	53	35
Milam	34	26	57	35
Mills	100	17	28	21
Mitchell	8	13	31	20
Montague	•	24	57	26
Montgomery	33	34	56	37
Moore	60	24	56	40
Morris	31	27	72	31
Motley	•	**	35	**
Nacogdoches	46	24	59	33
Navarro	46	33	61	39
Newton	26	30	60	29
Nolan	52	29	50	37
Nueces	51	31	48	43
Ochiltree	•	32	57	39
Oldham	•	6	14	10
Orange	42	30	56	31
Palo Pinto	**	33	53	34
Panola	40	34	61	37
Parker	62	38	63	40
Parmer	72	12	36	28
Pecos	88	14	31	29
Polk	14	45	52	42
Potter	51	36	62	44
Presidio	•	25	45	44
Rains	39	47	64	48
Randall	68	25	54	29
Reagan	33	4	31	20
Real	•	41	**	32
Red River	33	36	74	37
Reeves	22	18	49	46
Refugio	8	**	49	27
Roberts	•	7	0	7
Robertson	47	32	56	41
Rockwall	42	40	60	43
Runnels	29	16	48	29
Rusk	33	29	51	32
Sabine	36	36	64	36
San Augustine	35	21	0	28
San Jacinto	48	47	56	47
San Patricio	57	35	50	45
San Saba	•	26	46	32
Schleicher	•	3	36	20
Scurry	1	22	47	30
Shackelford	•	15	**	13
Shelby	36	18	64	27
Sherman	•	**	38	1
Smith	46	29	63	38
Somervell	•	27	38	28
Starr	•	24	48	48
Stephens	51	26	67	36
Sterling	•	15	**	8
Stonewall	43	20	52	30
Sutton	•	13	33	24
Swisher	7	12	48	28
Tarrant	49	33	59	41
Taylor	36	29	56	35
Terrell	•	34	**	4
Terry	70	15	48	37
Throckmorton	•	3	67	12
Titus	52	25	71	44
Tom Green	48	21	53	35
Travis	60	34	69	52
Trinity	36	36	78	40
Tyler	17	18	24	18
Upshur	31	30	63	32
Upton	0	9	42	27
Uvalde	•	19	52	43
Val Verde	22	31	47	44
Van Zandt	55	28	54	31
Victoria	46	29	60	47
Walker	58	28	71	44
Waller	41	31	67	42
Ward	57	32	39	37
Washington	55	17	56	31
Webb	•	44	40	41
Wharton	41	16	52	34
Wheeler	**	12	28	12
Wichita	49	38	57	42
Wilbarger	19	16	61	29
Willacy	**	11	47	44
Williamson	47	31	56	36
Wilson	43	25	45	33
Winkler	8	36	40	37
Wise	68	29	44	32
Wood	5	25	60	25
Yoakum	48	15	41	30
Young	35	22	50	24
Zapata	•	53	26	28
Zavala	**	61	47	47
Texas	**48**	**31**	**53**	**42**

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Attrition Rates - continued from page 8

percent in 1996-97 and in 1997-98 down from 6.7 percent in 1987-88. See the box on Page 11 for data from the two most recent reports.

Besides IDRA's annual reporting of the magnitude of the dropout problem and the need for accurate dropout data, the inaccuracy of the counting and reporting was underscored by the July 1996 review of TEA by the Texas state auditor.

As a result of inaccurate calculations and unverified counts, the state auditor estimated that the 1994 actual dropout rate was more than double the reported rate. As recently as 1998, the state auditor stated that underreporting of dropouts must be addressed by TEA.

This year, TEA attempted to track the status of students in grades seven to 12 over a one-year period through district-submitted reports. In May 1999, TEA released its first dropout and school leaver report entitled, *1996-97 and 1997-98 Returning and Non-Returning Students in Grades 7-12.* The new report summarizes school leaver information for individual districts with enrollments of 100 or more pupils. It provides counts and percentages for returning and non-returning students, including unreported students for the 1996-97 school year and underreported students for the 1997-98 school year.

TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY REPORTED DROPOUT RATES, BY RACE-ETHNICITY, 1996-97 AND 1997-98

SCHOOL YEAR/GROUP	7-12TH GRADE ENROLLMENT	TOTAL DROPOUTS	PERCENT OF TOTAL DROPOUTS	ANNUAL DROPOUT RATES	ESTIMATED LONGITUDINAL DROPOUT RATE
1996-97					
White	815,175	7,894	29.4%	1.0%	5.7%
African American	240,142	4,737	17.6%	2.0%	11.3%
Hispanic	603,067	13,859	51.5%	2.3%	13.0%
Other	47,588	411	1.5%	0.9%	5.1%
Total	**1,705,972**	**26,901**	**100.0%**	**1.6%**	**9.1%**
1997-98					
White	828,660	7,734	28.1%	0.9%	Not Available
African American	244,987	5,152	18.7%	2.1%	Not Available
Hispanic	619,855	14,127	51.3%	2.3%	Not Available
Other	49,637	537	1.9%	1.1%	Not Available
Total	**1,743,139**	**27,550**	**100.0%**	**1.6%**	**Not Available**

Source: Texas Education Agency, Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS)

In the 1998-99 PEIMS submission, school districts were given two choices for reporting enrollment information on all students enrolled in the district at any time during the 1997-98 school year in grades seven through 12:

1. Report a student as enrolled during the current school year, or
2. Report the student as a "leaver" on the leaver record and provide at least one departure reason for that student.

The school leaver report indicates that in many of the larger school districts, schools could not account for significant percentages of their pupils from one year to the next. Yet, rather than counting these "unreported students" as dropouts, the agency chose to disregard these numbers and continued to use official dropout numbers reflected in the data reported.

Many if not most of the "unreported pupils" reflected for many districts were probably dropouts that the new school leaver codes made more difficult to brush under the carpet.

Perhaps for the first time in TEA's history, there was an admission that a significant number of students were not included in the annual dropout counts reported by school districts to the agency. The agency estimated that more than 55,000 students were underreported as dropouts or school leavers.

In the dropout reporting for the 1997-98 school year, the agency used 37 "leaver codes" in three areas: graduate, leaver, and dropout. The number of leaver codes increased from 22 in the 1996-97 school year and earlier. The box on Page 12 compares the various school leaver codes listed by the agency for the 1996-97 and 1997-98 school years. The leaver codes give schools more options for categorizing students, which can have the result of further masking the dropout problem.

The findings of the TEA school leaver report are quoted as follows.

- "Thirty-seven leaver reason codes were available to describe the circumstances of each student's departure."
- "New leaver codes include such circumstances as withdrawal to enroll in a private school, withdrawal to attend another public school, withdrawal to attend school out-of-state, withdrawal to be home schooled, and death."
- "Prior to the leaver collection, districts were required to report information on returning students, graduates, and dropouts, but not on other kinds of leavers."
- "Many more students in these grades are being accounted for via the new leaver record reporting requirements. In 1997-98, approximately 3.6 percent of the students who left the system statewide were underreported, whereas for previous years the amount of unreported students was approximately 18.1 percent."
- "Not all students reported in attendance in grades seven through 12 during 1997-98 have leaver or enrollment information from the appropriate district for 1998-99. Although statewide, 3.6 percent of all students in grades seven through 12 the prior year were underreported, for districts with at least 100 students in enrollment (not including charter schools), the percent underreported ranges from 0.0 percent to 59.5 percent."
- "Some students were reported as leavers even though those students had not been reported in attendance or enrollment the prior school year. Thus, this analysis indicated both 'under' and 'over' reporting of the students from the prior year."
- "A significant portion of both the underreported and overreported students can be attributed to personal identification (PID) errors, i.e., student identification inconsistencies that prevent perfect matching of one student record to another record reported for that student. PID errors are usually generated when one or more of the following characteristics do not match the PEIMS PID data base: student ID [either a social security number or state identification number], last name, first name, or date of birth. Because of this, TEA made efforts to reduce the

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PEIMS LEAVER CODES USED IN 1996-97 AND 1997-98

LEAVER REASON	CODE	1996-97		1997-98	
		COLLECTED?/ TYPE	RECORD EXCLUDED?	COLLECTED?/ TYPE	RECORD EXCLUDED?
graduating	01	Graduate	yes	Graduate	yes
deceased	03			Leaver	yes
withdrew, documented enrollment elsewhere in Texas	05			Leaver	yes
official transfer to another Texas public school district	21			Leaver	yes
withdrew, documented enrollment out of Texas	06			Leaver	yes
withdrew, declared intent to enroll out of state	07			Leaver	yes
withdrew/left school, declare intent to enroll in a public school	28			Leaver	yes
withdrew/left school, declared intent to enroll in a private school	29			Leaver	yes
withdrew, home schooling	60			Leaver	yes
withdrew/left school to enter college to pursue a degree	24	Dropout	yes	Leaver	yes
withdrew/left school, declared intent to enter health care facility	30			Leaver	yes
withdrew/ left school, documented return to home country	16	Dropout	yes	Leaver	yes
expelled for criminal behavior	17	Dropout	yes	Leaver	yes
incarcerated in a facility outside the boundaries of the district	61			Leaver	yes
completed graduation requirements except for passing TAAS	19	Dropout	yes	Leaver	yes
withdrew, alternative programs towards completion of GED/diploma	22	Dropout	yes	Leaver	yes
district has documented evidence of student completing GED	31			Leaver	yes
GED previously, returned to school, left again	64			Leaver	yes
graduated previously, returned to school, left again	63			Leaver	yes
removed by Child Protective Services	66			Leaver	yes
withdrawn by ISD	62			Leaver	yes
withdrew/left school to pursue a job	02	Dropout	no	Dropout	no
withdrew/left school to join the military	04	Dropout	no	Dropout	no
withdrew/left school because of pregnancy	08	Dropout	no	Dropout	no
withdrew/left school to marry	09	Dropout	no	Dropout	no
withdrew/left school due to alcohol or other drug abuse problems	10	Dropout	no	Dropout	no
withdrew/left school because of low or failing grades	11	Dropout	no	Dropout	no
withdrew/left school because of poor attendance	12	Dropout	no	Dropout	no
withdrew/left school because of language problems	13	Dropout	no	Dropout	no
withdrew/left school because of age	14	Dropout	no	Dropout	no
withdrew/left school due to homelessness	15	Dropout	no	Dropout	no
withdrew to enroll in alternative program	23	Dropout	no	Dropout	no
withdrew/left school to enter college, no evidence of pursing degrees	25	Dropout	no	Dropout	no
expelled for other reasons than criminal behavior	26	Dropout	no	Dropout	no
has not completed graduation requirements, did not pass TAAS	27	Dropout	no	Dropout	no
failed to re-enroll following JJAEN term	65	Dropout	no	Dropout	no
reason unknown	99	Dropout	no	Dropout	no

Source: Texas Education Agency, *1996-97 and 1997-98 Returning and Non-Returning Students in Grades 7-12*, May 14, 1999

Attrition Rates - continued from page 11

number of underreported student attributes to each district by matching records on information other than the PEIMS student identification number."

Other findings of the TEA school leaver report include the following.

- Data on the disposition of duplicated student cases in 1996-97 showed that 69.4 percent of all students in grades seven through 12 were reported as returning students compared to 71.1 percent in 1997-98. Conversely, 30.6 percent of these students were reported as non-returning in 1996-97 as compared to 28.9 percent in 1997-98.
- For unduplicated student counts, 72.8 percent of all students in grades seven through 12 were reported as returning students in 1996-97 compared to 75.1 percent in 1997-98. About 27.2 percent of all students in grades seven through 12 in 1996-97 were reported as non-returning students compared to 24.9 percent in 1997-98.

In a statement, then State Education Commissioner Michael Moses acknowledged the problem with the large number of unreported student records and warned districts that next year's ratings might count these *desaparecidos* (lost pupils) as dropouts.

"The inclusion of these 'unreported pupil' numbers in either this year's or next year's dropout counts would send a shock wave all over the state and perhaps help wake up a populace that has been lulled into thinking that dropout rates are no longer an issue in Texas," commented Dr. Albert Cortez, director of the IDRA Institute for Policy and Leadership.

What the TEA Report Does Not Say

Interestingly, the TEA report does not provide a full context for assessing the statewide number and percent of students who failed to graduate. Most of the report provides percentages of students returning or not returning without clearly providing the *magnitude* of the number of students reported as graduates, dropouts and other school leavers (see Page 14).

Following are some observations that TEA failed to mention in its school leaver report.

- Of the 1.7 million students in grades seven through 12 in 1996-97, an estimated 464,024 students were classified as "non-returning" students. The 27.2 percent non-returning rate translates into almost a half million students who did not return to the school of record.

Without accurate dropout data tied to the accountability system, people can erroneously conclude that the dropout problem is either solved, minimal, or only affects minority students.

- Of the 1.7 million students in grades seven through 12 in 1997-98, an estimated 434,042 students were classified as "non-returning" students. The 24.9 percent non-returning rate translates into almost a half million students who did not return to the school of record.
- The enrollment status of an estimated 245,933 students was not reported by school districts in 1996-97.
- An estimated 55,123 students were underreported as dropouts or school leavers in 1997-98.

These observations are based on the "duplicated student count" data. The school leaver report also included parallel data based on "duplicated student counts."

Recommendations for Improving State Dropout Accounting

The collection and reporting of accurate longitudinal dropout data is a must. The state of Texas has made significant strides in the development of an accountability system that is receiving national attention as a model of educational accountability. The absence of accurate longitudinal dropout data is serving to undermine this system.

In January of this year, IDRA disseminated its policy brief on the dropout issue in Texas. *Missing: Texas Youth – Dropout and Attrition Rates in Texas Public High Schools* presents an in-depth look at the dropout issue and provides some answers and recommendations for the collection and reporting of "real" numbers of students missing from Texas schools.

In its policy brief, IDRA made the following recommendations for improving state and local dropout identification, counting and reporting procedures.

- ***Revise the goal of the state dropout program to comply with the mandate:***

  The goal of the program shall be to reduce the actual statewide *longitudinal* dropout rate to not more than 5 percent, such that a minimum of 95 percent of any class of students enrolling in Texas public schools will receive their high school diploma.
- ***Modify state policy requirements so that a "dropout" is defined as follows:***

  A student is defined as a dropout if the student enrolled in Texas public schools does not receive a high school diploma and for whom the state has no proof of re-enrollment in a school within or outside of Texas that has the authority to grant high school diplomas. The definition should *not* include students enrolled in Texas public schools who:
  - are enrolled in school-based General Education Development (GED) programs,
  - have successfully completed all high school course requirements but have not passed the TAAS, and
  - are reported as having returned to their home country, but for whom there is no verification of enrollment by a receiving school.
- ***Require each public school district in Texas, on a yearly basis, to report to the state education agency the number of students enrolled in Texas public schools who:***
  - are enrolled in school-based GED programs,
  - have successfully completed all high school course requirements but have not passed the TAAS, and
  - are reported as having returned to their home country, but for whom there is no verification.

These students should be reported separately and not be included in the dropout definition.

- ***Modify the state education agency procedure for computing the actual state longitudinal dropout rate:*** The following computation is an example of how the rate could be calculated:

  The state longitudinal dropout rate is calculated by determining the total number of students enrolled in Texas public schools in seventh grade and subtracting the total number of those same students receiving a high school diploma five years later, excluding students who will not graduate but are still enrolled in the regular school program that leads to acquiring a high school diploma (such as students who

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PERCENT OF RETURNING AND NON-RETURNING STUDENTS IN GRADES SEVEN THROUGH 12, 1996-97 AND 1997-98 (STATEWIDE)

CATEGORY	1996-97		1997-98	
	NUMBER*	PERCENT	NUMBER*	PERCENT
Total Enrollment (Grades 7-12)	1,705,972	100.0	1,743,139	100.0
Disposition of Duplicated Students				
Returning Students	1,183,945	69.4	1,239,372	71.1
Non-Returning Students	522,027	30.6	503,767	28.9
Reported Graduates	172,303	10.1	184,773	10.6
Official Dropouts	25,590	1.5	26,147	1.5
Dropout Records Excluded	15,354	0.9	10,459	0.6
Overreported Students		*na*		*na*
Underreported Students		*na*	62,773	3.6
Unreported Students	308,781	18.1		*na*
Official Leavers		*na*	106,331	6.1
Leaver Records Excluded		*na*	115,047	6.6
Disposition of Unduplicated Students				
Returning Students	1,241,948	72.8	1,309,097	75.1
Non-Returning Students	464,024	27.2	434,042	24.9
Exit Reasons for Non-Returning Students				
Graduate	179,113	38.6	190,110	43.8
Dropout	25,985	5.6	25,174	5.8
Previous Dropout	1,856	0.4	1,736	0.4
College	464	0.1	434	0.1
GED	464	0.1	6,945	1.6
Alternative Program	3,712	0.8	16,060	3.7
In-State Transfer	464	0.1	80,298	18.5
Home Country (return to)	2,320	0.5	6,945	1.6
Completed, no TAAS	1,856	0.4	2,604	0.6
Out-of-State Transfer		*na*	31,685	7.3
Private School		*na*	5,643	1.3
Home School		*na*	7,813	1.8
Incarcerated		*na*	3,906	0.9
Death		*na*	868	0.2
Underreported		*na*	55,123	12.7
Unreported	245,933	53.0		*na*

* The numbers in this table were estimated by IDRA based on total enrollment figures and the corresponding percentages.
na = not applicable
Source: Texas Education Agency, *1996-97 and 1997-98 Returning and Non-Returning Students in Grades 7-12*, May 14, 1999

Attrition Rates - *continued from page 13*

were retained or do not have sufficient credits), divided by the number of pupils in the original seventh grade group and multiplying by 100 to determine the percentage.

- ***Require that a school district's longitudinal dropout rate be tied to the state's accountability system, the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS):*** A school district must accurately report its longitudinal dropout rate for groups of individual students (cohorts) to the state education agency as it reports each year all other AEIS indicators, which are factored into the district's accountability rating.
- ***Require that each local school district establish local dropout oversight committee(s) or task force(s) including parent representatives, private sector representatives and school staff:*** These committees should regularly and systematically monitor the dropout identification, counting, and reporting process and dropout prevention efforts at their campuses and districts. Such efforts should be part of the regular school program involving regular school staff.
- ***Require that the state education agency establish a site monitoring team that is responsible for maintaining the integrity of the statewide dropout data:*** A trigger mechanism should be developed for the team to review cases where the district attrition rate is more than 10 percent of their reported dropout rate.
- ***Require that the state education agency collect information on the reasons students drop out of school in a way that significantly decreases the number of "unknown" reasons for dropping out:*** Information should also include data on *school-related dropout factors* such as school retention rates, school faculty attrition, credentials and experience, and school per-pupil expenditures.
- ***Require that the state education agency collect and disseminate information on local districts' dropout prevention and recovery efforts:*** This should include proven strategies used and evidence of effectiveness in lowering the dropout rate.

Despite growing concerns about the accuracy in counting and reporting dropout data, the Texas legislature in its most recent session failed to enact any significant legislation to improve the accuracy of methods to count and report dropouts. In order to alleviate some of the pressure on Texas schools with a high number of dropouts and to shadow the concerns about the accuracy of dropout data reported by the state education agency, the Texas legislature provided a special allocation of $85 million to finance special intervention programs for ninth grade students identified as at-risk of dropping out (Cortez, 1999).

With the release of its latest study on the percent of returning and non-returning students, it appears that the state is still more intent on finding ways to *lower the dropout numbers rather than on lowering the number of dropouts*. Without accurate dropout data tied to the accountability system, people can erroneously conclude that the dropout problem is either solved, minimal, or only affects minority students (Robledo Montecel, 1999). The availability of accurate longitudinal data on school dropouts, tied to the Academic Excellence Indicator System, is critical to maintaining the credibility of the school accountability system and to informing urgently needed strategic dropout prevention and recovery efforts.

Resources

Cortez, A. "Texas Legislative Update," *IDRA Newsletter* (San Antonio: Intercultural Development Research Association, August 1999).

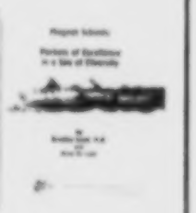
Robledo Montecel, M. *$319 Billion and 1.2 Million Students Lost: Remarks to the State Board of Education Committee on Planning* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, January 7, 1999).

Supik, J. and R. Johnson. *Missing: Texas Youth – Dropout and Attrition Rates in Texas Public High Schools* (San Antonio: Intercultural Development Research Association, 1999).

Texas Education Agency. *1996-97 and 1997-98 Returning and Non-Returning Students in Grades 7-12* (Austin, May 14, 1999).

Texas Education Agency. Texas Dropout Rates by Ethnicity. http://www.tea.state.tx.us/research/dropout/9798/appendb/state.html (1998).

Roy Johnson, M.S., directs the IDRA Division of Evaluation Research. Comments and questions may be directed to him via e-mail at contact@idra.org.



MAGNET SCHOOLS:

POCKETS OF EXCELLENCE IN A SEA OF DIVERSITY

Bradley Scott, M.A. and Anna De Luna

Learn 12 strategies that have been proven to work!

✓ Strategies for staffing
✓ Strategies for student selection and assignment
✓ Strategies for student selection and enrollment
✓ Strategies for student-teacher ratios
✓ Strategies for curriculum
✓ Strategies for the magnet school image
✓ Strategies for the physical environment
✓ Strategies for student outcomes
✓ Strategies for student support
✓ Strategies for race relations
✓ Strategies for parent and community involvement
✓ Strategies for magnet and non-magnet school collaboration

One of the only multi-district studies of magnet schools, the book examines 12 important indicators of effectiveness in magnet schools that are used as a strategy for school desegregation. *Pockets of Excellence* reports on 11 magnet school campuses in four school districts in Federal Region VI involving the states of Arkansas, Louisiana and Texas. In addition to the information listed above, *Pockets of Excellence* also offers recommendations about effective strategies in the operation of magnet schools that might be adopted by non-magnet schools in desegregated settings as a part of their school improvement and restructuring efforts. Wherever students may be found – regardless of their race, sex, national origin or economic circumstance – they can succeed. What *Pockets of Excellence* demonstrates is that schools with diverse populations can produce success. (ISBN: 1-878550-54-3; 1995; 100 pages; $25)

To order, send check or purchase order to: Intercultural Development Research Association, 5835 Callaghan Road, Suite 350, San Antonio, Texas 78228-1190; or send purchase order by fax, 210-444-1714. For more information call 210-444-1710 or e-mail: contact@idra.org.

Eleventh Annual National Dropout Prevention Network Conference

Renaissance
Austin Hotel
Austin, Texas
December 5-8, 1999

In carrying out the theme, *Every Child Is a Soaring Star*, the 11th Annual National Dropout Prevention Network conference will feature a comprehensive program that will provide a dynamic atmosphere, showcasing programs that are effectively being used to work with students in at-risk situations.

Keynote Speakers

Dr. Peter Benson

President of Search Institute, Minneapolis

"Beyond the 'Village' Rhetoric: Creating Healthy Communities for Children and Adolescents"

Dr. Benson leads a staff of 80 social scientists and change agents dedicated to promoting the health and well-being of America's children and adolescents. He is the author of nine books, his most recent titled *All Kids Are Our Kids*. He lectures and speaks widely, serves as a consultant to federal agencies and foundations, and is an adjunct professor of educational policy at the University of Minnesota.

Dr. Mary Montle Bacon

Consultant, Hillsboro, California

"Them that Gots the Gold, Makes the Rules: Achieving Equity and Excellence in a Pluralistic Society"

Dr. Bacon, a private consultant, a former teacher, university instructor, counselor, psychologist and administrator shares her experiences. In addition to the education world, Dr. Bacon has held positions in the juvenile justice system as a probation officer and as a delinquency prevention officer in the California State Attorney General's Office. Just as important, she is a parent who manages to maintain a refreshing sense of humor while addressing the challenges of child rearing in these turbulent times.

Dr. Dudley E. Flood

Retired School Administrator, Raleigh

"Every Child Deserves a Chance to Succeed"

Dr. Flood has taught and been a principal at the elementary and secondary levels. He served in the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction for 21 years as assistant and associate state superintendent. Most recently he served for five years as executive director of the North Carolina Association of School Administrators. During his career he has received more than 300 awards for civic service.

Dr. María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel

Executive Director, Intercultural Development Research Association, San Antonio

"Musical Chairs and Unkept Promises"

Dr. Robledo Montecel's lifetime concern has been with youth, especially youth who are minority, poor or limited-English-proficient. Her advocacy and expertise in education have been instrumental in achieving the goals of excellence and equity in education for students in San Antonio, the nation, and the world. Going against the current deficit model approaches in schools, she champions the value, integrity, and possibilities for all children.

Conference Strands

- Bilingual and Multicultural Issues
- Technology
- Alternative Education Programs
- Current Educational Research: Applications and Utilization
- Parent Involvement
- Juvenile Justice Issues
- Business/Industry Issues and Career Education
- Community/Local Government Issues and Services
- Migrant Education
- Family/Social Issues
- Service Learning

Partners

The National Dropout Prevention Center/Network
Texas Education Agency *in cooperation with*

- Austin Independent School District
- Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin
- Communities In Schools of Texas
- Intercultural Development Research Association
- Pflugerville Independent School District
- Round Rock Independent School District
- Southwest Educational Development Laboratory
- Texas Association for Alternative Education
- Texas Association of School Administrators
- Texas Association of School Boards
- Texas Association of Secondary School Principals
- Texas Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
- Texas Business and Education Coalition
- Texas Parent/Teacher Association

Registration

You can register for the 11th Annual National Dropout Prevention Network conference by downloading a form from the web site www.dropoutprevention.org and mailing it in or by registering on line. To receive a registration form by mail call 231-933-3962. For more information call Linda Shirley at the NDPC at 864-656-2599.

Questions?

If you have a question about registration, call registration headquarters at 231-933-3962. Questions about the program or any other conference issues should be directed to Linda Shirley at the conference headquarters at 864-656-2599.

Lodging and Travel Information

Participants are responsible for making their own hotel reservations. The conference hotel headquarters is Renaissance Austin Hotel, 9721 Arboretum Boulevard, 512-343-2626; fax 512-346-6364. You can check out the conference hotel headquarters at www.renaissance hotel.com.

Room rates for the conference are: $112-single, $128-double, plus local tax. Individuals should identify themselves as being with the 11th Annual National Dropout Prevention Network conference in order to receive the conference rate. For reservations, call the Renaissance Austin by November 15, 1999, to ensure conference rates. All reservations will be confirmed by the hotel directly to the guest.

To confirm room reservations, a deposit equal to the first night room rate per room is due three weeks prior to arrival. Deposit can be made by major credit cards or check and is refundable up to 48 hours prior to arrival. The conference rate will be honored for one day prior to and one day after the official conference dates. Check-in time is 3:00 p.m., and check-out time is 1:00 p.m.

Ground Transportation in Austin

Other than obtaining a rental car, options for transportation from the new Austin Bergstrom International Airport to the Austin Renaissance Hotel at the Arboretum are:

SuperShuttle – You can make reservations prior to arriving in Austin by dialing their national number 1-800-Blue-Van or you can wait until arriving at the airport, follow signs to Ground Transportation, and book then. The approximate cost for shuttle service is $13 one way.

Taxi service – can be acquired at the Ground Transportation area of the airport. Approximate cost is a minimum of $20 one way.

Conference Airlines

Conference participants desiring discount fares on Delta Airlines, the official air carrier for the conference, should contact Small World Travel (official travel agency for the conference) at 1-800-849-6125.

For a brochure or to find out more about:

- ✓ Detailed agenda
- ✓ Conference fees
- ✓ Preconference workshops
- ✓ Special events
- ✓ Technology center
- ✓ Give and take session
- ✓ Star sessions
- ✓ and more!

Visit

www.dropoutprevention.org

or call

231-933-3962

Lessons Learned – *continued from page 8*

or collecting achievement data presented incredible obstacles. While districts are happy to receive grant funding for special projects, their policies can jeopardize continued funding by not providing student accountability data.

The use of test score data to measure progress of immigrant students is also problematic since many recent immigrant students are excluded from taking the state accountability measure until they attain sufficient levels of English proficiency. Programs for recent immigrant students need to institute assessment systems, such as portfolio assessment, to document student progress in the initial stages of acquiring English oral proficiency and literacy.

Another issue related to the bureaucratic nature of schools is the use of a "one size fits all" approach to policy. **Both at the district and campus levels, policy is framed for mainstream students but must be modified to include special programs for recent immigrants.** Failure to modify policy leads to ludicrous, but all too prevalent, situations where recent immigrants are required to take classes or participate in activities that will not teach them anything or teach what they already know.

For example, the high school course credit system needs to be modified. Students should not be made to sit in ESL classes below their level of English proficiency just to gain course credit. Another failure to modify school policy has led to preliterate newcomers center students sitting through classes on how to take the TAAS test.

In a similar vein, low-schooled immigrant high school students who do not know how to multiply or divide should not be placed in an algebra class due to an inflexible policy. Inattention to modifying policy for immigrant students can also jeopardize the existence of programs, as in the previously discussed case of calculating the student-teacher ratio for a district newcomers center in the spring as opposed to the fall or in the case of stipulating that high schools can only have one writing lab per school.

Special programs need to be built into the district structure from the beginning. Absence of district support and advocacy of special programs slows progress. While starting small and later enlarging the scope of a project is often an effective strategy, outside funding may end before project initiatives are taken to the district level.

The TIEC project had district representatives on the campus implementation teams at both campuses, yet in many cases they served only in an advisory capacity. A more effective strategy is to balance campus-level activities with district-level advocacy for

Lessons Learned – *continued on page 18*

Lessons Learned - *continued from page 17*

immigrant students. Our experience with the career center project in El Paso ISD provides an excellent example of such a two-pronged approach.

District "buy-in" is essential to the success of special programs at individual campuses. Closely linked to "buy-in" is the issue of coordination of special programs with district initiatives. Ideally, district personnel should become invested in the work of special projects and be encouraged to participate actively rather than viewing them as competing or being at cross-purposes with district programs.

Another issue that relates to the scope of the project is the importance of extending special projects throughout the school. As previously discussed, building a wedge into existing school structures is much less expedient than organizing the school so that immigrant student concerns are integrated throughout the school's management structure, policy and course offerings. **For this reason, projects need to begin by including teachers and administrators outside the ESL department in project activities.**

Perhaps the biggest lesson learned from the TIEC project was that the scope of this project was enormous. Great strides were made in a short amount of time with a small staff. At the completion of the project, advocacy and general awareness of the needs of immigrant students was very high. Two project initiatives were taken to the district level, which attests to their success. When foundation funding ended, it was difficult to distinguish between programs that originated within the TIEC project and those that had their origins within the district, community-based organizations or project partners.

We worked as a collaborative with the common goal of improving the education of immigrant students. From that experience, we learned valuable lessons about how to effectively work in schools with large numbers of immigrant students to develop, implement and sustain appropriate educational programs and services. Those lessons are shared here to assist others who wish to provide the best possible education for immigrant students. They are our future.

Dr. Pam McCollum is a senior education associate in the IDRA Division of Professional Development. Comments and questions may be directed to her via e-mail at contact@idra.org.

"Lessons Learned, Lessons Shared" provides information on immigrant education concerning legal issues, effective instructional programs, and educational resources – including Internet listings – for this unique group of students. Copies of the publication may be purchased by sending a check or purchase order to IDRA (ISBN 1-878550-66-7; 53 pages, 1998; $24.95 each).

HIGHLIGHTS OF RECENT IDRA ACTIVITIES

In August, IDRA worked with **8,250** teachers, administrators and parents through **71** training and technical assistance activities and **186** program sites in **12** states plus the United Kingdom. Topics included:

- Bilingual Reading Strategies
- Racial and Gender Bias in Curriculum
- Building School-Family Partnerships
- IDRA Bilingual Programs Evaluation Institute
- Conflict Resolution and Discipline

Participating agencies and school districts included:

- Oklahoma City Public Schools
- Irving Independent School District (ISD), Texas
- Texas Education Service Center, Region I
- West Las Vegas Schools, New Mexico
- Alice ISD, Texas

Activity Snapshot

IDRA and 10 education service centers across Texas recently sponsored a statewide video conference on bilingual education. About 70 parents and educators came together to review effective practices. This event proved to be an innovative opportunity for sharing ideas among educators and parents via live distance learning. Both English and Spanish were spoken, and translations were provided for monolingual participants. The activity also was designed to support the newly emerging Parent Coalition for Bilingual Education. The event itself was sponsored by the *Mobilization for Equity* project at IDRA funded by the Ford Foundation through the National Coalition of Advocates for Students; the IDRA *South Central Collaborative for Equity*, the equity assistance center funded by the U.S. Department of Education to serve schools in Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Texas; and the *STAR Center*, the comprehensive regional assistance center funded by the U.S. Department of Education to serve Texas and a collaboration of IDRA, the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin, and RMC Research Corporation.

Regularly, IDRA staff provides services to:

- public school teachers
- parents
- administrators
- other decision makers in public education

Services include:

- training and technical assistance
- evaluation
- serving as expert witnesses in policy settings and court cases
- publishing research and professional papers, books, videos and curricula

For information on IDRA services for your school district or other group, contact IDRA at 210/444-1710.

Parent Coalition for Bilingual Education

Attention Bilingual Education Community

IDRA is happy to announce the formation of the Parent Coalition for Bilingual Education. Parents are supporting bilingual education and developing their leadership skills. Several events in the 1999-00 school year are prime opportunities for parents to share information about bilingual education.

Texas Association for Bilingual
Education (TABE)
Annual Conference
October 20-23, 1999
Corpus Christi, Texas

An interactive parent institute focusing on parent leadership for bilingual education is being held in conjunction with the conference. Parents are serving as presenters, facilitators and participants.

National Association for
Bilingual Education (NABE)
Annual Conference
February 15-19, 2000
San Antonio, Texas

The general conference will feature an interactive parent institute on February 18 and 19.

Statewide Bilingual
Video Conference
(Spanish-English)
Early 2000
Date and time to be announced
Education Service Centers

Another video conference is being planned on bilingual education hosted through the Texas education service centers and sponsored by IDRA, bilingual school personnel and parents.

We invite you to participate in and support these efforts in a variety of ways:

1. **Identify parents** with children in bilingual programs to participate in the Parent Coalition for Bilingual Education. We would like names, addresses and phone numbers of parents who value and can attest to the successes of bilingual education.

2. Send us the names of **parent liaisons** and **outreach workers** who recruit parents for these events and disseminate this information.

3. Send us any copies of **parent-friendly** and **bilingual** (if possible) **information**:
   - The rationale for bilingual education
   - The benefits of bilingual education
   - How to identify a good bilingual program
   - The requirements for being a bilingual teacher
   - The skills a good bilingual teacher must have
   - How bilingual education is an effective means of teaching English
   - Various forms or models of bilingual education
   - How a parent can support high quality bilingual education

4. Join these efforts by contacting us and **disseminating this information** to any others who would be interested in participating.

The Parent Coalition for Bilingual Education meets regularly. For information on the meeting dates and times, contact Anna Alicia Romero (e-mail: aromero@idra.org) or Aurelio M. Montemayor (e-mail: amontmyr@idra.org).

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majority of his time helping his students with their math and, as a result, has sharpened his own math skills as well. Rich feels that his tutees are experiencing the same problems he did as a young student, and wants to show them that through education, their situations will improve. He wants to set a good example for his tutees, "I see the tutees with the same problems I used to have and how it's so important for them to get help so they can continue their education and get better."

Rich explains that though his job as a tutor can be difficult at times, his fifth-grade students make him happy. He says that these tutees have more difficulty paying attention, so he must be versatile in dealing with them. He has been forced to develop new ways to earn the interest of his tutees and is proud to report that his new style of teaching is producing great results. He feels that it is necessary to develop a delicate balance of fun and discipline in order to help the student *want* to learn.

Rich gets support from his friends and family. He says that his parents and grandmother are very proud of his involvement in the program and have noticed many differences in his attitude at home. Rich feels that he now gives his elders more respect. Thanks to his work as a tutor, Rich says that he now understands how difficult it is to be a caregiver for young children and prides himself in his newly found sense of patience.

Rich believes that his success as a tutor can be attributed to his thorough preparation. He says that he prepares himself both mentally and physically for his daily meetings with his tutees. He also feels that his love for his new profession gives him a personal strength that can be seen while he works with his students, "Only an emergency will keep me from seeing my tutees every day."

> **"Only an emergency will keep me from seeing my tutees every day."**
>
> **– a Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutor in Houston, Texas**

Rich plans to use the money he earns from his work as a tutor to open a savings account. He also says that he will use a portion of his wages to purchase any personal affects that he may need in order to relieve his grandmother, whom he lives with, of a financial burden, "I try to give my paycheck to my grandmother to pay bills when she needs it." He says it makes him feel good to know that he is in a position to help his family.

Rich says he will hold a special place in his heart for his teacher coordinator because no matter what the circumstances, she always helped them get into the spirit of their job. Rich says that he enjoyed helping his tutees improve their education, and has felt a great deal of personal satisfaction because of it.

Although Rich has always planned on completing high school, he says that the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program has helped him to make his education a priority, "I feel that school is a lot more important now."

If Rich was to offer advice to future tutors, he would tell them to always "keep their cool." He says that his short temper is now a thing of the past and feels he is an example of how much a person can change given the right circumstances. He also says that tutors must always think about what they say in advance because they are setting a very important example for these young students, "The tutees see you as a friend, and a role model, so it's important that the tutors behave."

Looking Forward

The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program will continue to benefit thousands of students into this new millennium, reaching a record 210 schools across the globe during this next school year.

Josie Danini Supik, M.A., coordinates IDRA's materials development. Comments and questions may be directed to her via e-mail at contact@idra.org.

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IDRA Newsletter

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Alternative Education Programs in Texas: More Questions than Answers

Albert Cortez, Ph.D.

Inside this Issue:

- **Educating a new generation**
- **Comprehensive school reform**
- **New parent information and resource center**
- **Content area program enhancement**

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In August 1999, the Office of the Texas State Auditor issued a report on the *Texas Safe Schools Act.* Adopted in 1997, the act created juvenile justice and disciplinary alternative education programs to remove what were termed "disruptive and or violent" students from Texas public school classrooms. The push for the creation of these alternative education programs originated from educators who were dissatisfied with provisions for removing pupils considered to be disruptive from local school classrooms.

The 1997 legislation created disciplinary alternative education programs (DAEPs) as educational programs that would ensure that, during periods of disciplinary action or expulsion from school, students would continue to be educated instead of being "put out on the street." To address more serious offenders, the act created juvenile justice alternative education programs (JJAEPs) that would deal with incarcerated pupils who had been referred to the state's juvenile justice system.

Years after its implementation, the state auditor reports in *A Report on Safe Schools Programs* that the alternative education programs operated in Texas suffer from numerous ailments ranging from lack of implementation of the state requirements to an absence of any useful evaluation data (other than sporadic anecdotal accounts) that indicate whether the programs are working as intended.

In its report, the state auditor's office lists four general conclusions:

- School officials do not consistently remove violent students to alternative education programs as the act requires;
- The academic progress of many students in alterative education programs is not measured;
- Special education, minority and at-risk pupils are disproportionately represented in alternative education programs; and
- Some school districts that expelled pupils to JJAEPs continued to report them as eligible for Foundation School Program funding, in violation of state law.

The findings by the state auditor follow the publication of the Intercultural Development Research Association's (IDRA) own analysis of DAEPs reported in a policy brief, *Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs: What is Known; What is Needed,* published and disseminated in February 1999 (Cortez and Robledo Montecel, 1999). IDRA studied data on alternative education programs that were designed to address those pupils not involved in serious violations of the state criminal code but whom local teachers and administrators considered sufficiently disruptive to merit removal from the regular school program.

The state auditor's findings closely parallel the conclusions reached in IDRA's analysis of DAEPs, though the auditor's data yield important new insights into aspects of the JJAEPs being implemented in the more densely populated counties in Texas. These new findings serve to validate IDRA's earlier research and reinforce the stated need for significant modifications in current state

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policies.

Proponents of the *Texas Safe Schools Act* tout it as having contributed to making local schools safer for all pupils. But the auditor's data reveal that in as many as 850 cases involving offenses that should have resulted in a student's referral to a JJAEP, he or she was instead referred to a DAEP. State officials attributed this mis-referral to lack of local school understanding of the law or reluctance to make the more serious referral. This mis-referral created situations where more serious offenders were inter-mingled with pupils who had been referred to DAEPs for less serious offenses.

The state auditor's report verifies IDRA's earlier findings in two other critical areas: (1) the over-representation of minority and low-income pupils to DAEPs and (2) the serious lack of equitable accountability for DAEPs.

The state auditor noted that statewide data on student referrals to alternative education programs indicate that students considered at risk, minority students and students from low-income households were more likely to be referred to alternative education programs than were their White student counterparts. While White pupils represent 45 percent of the state enrollment, they represent only 34 percent of alternative education programs' pupil referrals. In comparison, African American pupils constitute only 14 percent of the statewide enrollment yet they represent 21 percent of pupils referred to alternative education programs. Similarly, Hispanic pupils are reported as having constituted 38 percent of the student enrollment, but 44 percent of alternative education programs' referrals. Overall, minorities constitute 66 percent of alternative education program placements, though they constitute only 55 percent of statewide enrollment. In IDRA's analysis of statewide data similar patterns emerged.

The state auditor's findings closely parallel the conclusions reached in IDRA's analysis of DAEPs, though the auditor's data yield important new insights into aspects of JJAEPs.

A county-level look at referral rates by race and ethnic group is even more revealing. In Bexar County, 76 percent of referrals are minority pupils; in Dallas County, 65 percent are minority; in Harris County, 83 percent are minority; and in Travis County, 77 percent are minority. While it is recognized that Texas' urban counties have a large minority population, this does not change the fact that a disproportionate number of minority pupils are becoming the subjects of referrals to these alternative education programs. Given the fact that little or nothing is known about the effectiveness of these programs, minority advocates should be concerned about the proliferation of these programs.

Confounding the data in IDRA's research was the growing number of alternative education program pupils being reported by school districts as "unknown" race or ethnic background. This is a development that we suspect serves to mask even more serious minority over-referral.

According to the state auditor, students at risk of dropping out of school and students requiring special education services are also disproportionately placed in alternative education programs.

In the summary data provided in the report, the auditor's study reveals that referrals tend to increase as students get older. Referrals by grade level indicate that the percentages of pupils by grade begin to seriously increase at grades six, seven and eight. Referrals peak at grade nine, which accounts for one-fourth of all alternative education programs referrals. Referrals then decline in grades 10 through 12.

We do not consider it coincidental that ninth grade is when student retentions in grade peak and the greatest number of students drop out. A closer look at the relationship between alternative education program referrals, retention in grade and dropping out is merited given these findings.

Concerns with Data Quality and Availability

Perhaps the most critical conclusion reported by the state auditor is the finding, "Data is insufficient to show if alternative education works" (1999). According to the auditor's report:

> The state has paid $28 million in fiscal year 1998 and again in 1999 for alternative education programs that have not generated sufficient data to support that they have a positive effect

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***The Intercultural Development Research Association** (IDRA)* is a non-profit organization with a 501(c)(3) tax exempt status. The purpose of the organization is to disseminate information concerning equality of educational opportunity.

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Educating a New Generation: A Reflection on the Process

Hilaria Bauer, M.A.

Teachers must be alert to the need for continually updating their teaching skills and practices.

My youngest daughter, Ariel, started third grade this year. As we were getting ready to transition from the carefree summer vacation into the school routine, my mind began to wonder about her new teacher. I wondered about this new person about to enter our lives. What kind of teacher will this person be? Will this individual understand the spirited nature of my 8-year-old? Will this person allow Ariel to be the class translator for recent immigrants in the class – fulfilling Ariel's need to be useful without becoming the kid who wants to help the teacher all the time?

Ariel, on the other hand, had other concerns. She wondered if her teacher will read books to her, if the teacher will have fun activities, and if the new teacher will give the class something exciting to do. Even if our goals were slightly different, we both wanted a good teacher.

One of the priorities in President Clinton's *Call to Action for American Education in the 21st Century*, states: "There will be a talented, dedicated and well-prepared teacher in every classroom." The call to action also enlists a number of strategies designed to achieve this priority. The strategies include identifying and rewarding our most talented teachers, attracting talented young people into the teaching profession, and reinventing teacher preparation programs. The nation wants good teachers.

When most of us think about "good teaching," we rarely think about someone's credentials. Yet, intuitively we are able to identify characteristics that make a person a "good" teacher. Good teachers are always aware of two things:

- There are different ways of learning.
- There are different ways of teaching.

Teachers must be alert to the need for continually updating their teaching skills and practices (Wagschal, 1997). As teachers, we need to reflect on whom we teach and how we teach. Student learning does not happen when there is a mismatch between the two. Usually, we must adapt our teaching style. Good teachers understand what their students need to know. Education is not skills training. Education is the development of individual capacity and competency in the context of increasingly complex levels of content and meaningful activity. The skills children need – including children in poor communities and communities of color – must be delivered in a rich context through a curriculum that is rigorous, is relevant, and takes both the social context of schooling and students' real lives as primary points of departure (Karp, 1997).

Effective instruction requires the teacher to step outside the realm of personal experiences into the world of the learner. It is the student who must be engaged for learning to occur. It is the student who must make the commitment to learn (Brown, 1997). One of the best ways to engage a student in a lesson is by connecting what needs to be taught to the student's background, by making what needs to be learned relevant in the student's mind and heart.

Learning occurs when prior knowledge is accessed and linked to new information. New information is understood and stored by calling up the appropriate knowledge framework and then integrating the new information (Jones, et al, 1987). Teachers need to be able to understand and value their students' backgrounds and the "cultural capital" they bring to the classroom and to use these assets while guiding the class into new concepts.

Effective instruction provides different alternatives for student interaction. Students need opportunities to engage in role play and cooperative learning experiences (Solis, 1998). Knowing how to work cooperatively with others – to build on the knowledge and experiences of diverse people who bring different perspectives to the thinking and reasoning process – can help students to expand their thinking and explore new approaches to learning (Brown, 1997).

Using heterogeneous learning groups allows students who traditionally have been perceived as having "low-status" in the classroom to demonstrate their knowledge and expertise. For example, grouping English as a second language (ESL) students with native English speakers allows language learners the opportunity to demonstrate expertise in other areas as they acquire English (Cárdenas, 1995a; Cohen, 1986).

Effective instruction promotes creative and critical thinking. Students need the opportunity to reveal how they solve problems in a safe environment. Effective teachers are interested in nurturing the students' thought patterns by allowing more than one way to do things or more than one way to answer a question, since real-life situations rarely have only one correct alternative.

Critical thinking abilities can be fostered by promoting transference with tasks that require students to intelligently adapt modifiable learning tools. Reasoning determines students' ability to transfer learning from one subject area to another, or from one situation to another (Hendricks, 1994).

Effective instruction values and promotes the students' backgrounds. Good teachers understand how important it is to acknowledge students' home language and culture and how eradication of them can be felt as dehumanizing. Examining school practices is critical so that teachers do not unintentionally promote tracking and segregation within the school and classroom. For example, students who are limited-English-proficient (LEP) are considered to be at risk of dropping out and, consequently, are perceived to be "deficient" and in need of "remediation" (Cárdenas, 1995b). Such perceptions of diverse students lowers teachers' expectations, which in turn can compromise students' potential for academic success (Trueba, 1997; Gonzales, 1996).

Good teachers facilitate and enhance

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RE-CONNECT

Reform in Education: Communities Organizing Networks for Emerging Collaborations with Teachers

Comprehensive Parent Involvement Initiative

Through the national Goals 2000 Initiative, the U.S. Department of Education has established parent information and resource centers (PIRCs) across the country to bring together parents, schools, universities and community organizations as well as businesses to support under-served student populations.

The Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) is proud to announce that it will establish *Reform in Education: Communities Organizing Networks for Emerging Collaborations with Teachers* (RE-CONNECT), the center that will serve Texas.

What are the goals of RE-CONNECT?
RE-CONNECT is…

- ✓ Providing training and technical assistance to parent educators,
- ✓ Establishing new preschool program sites that will serve as model sites,
- ✓ Assisting existing preschool program sites to improve the quality of their services, and
- ✓ Building a state-wide network of parents who will serve as parent leaders.

What is the basic principle of RE-CONNECT?
RE-CONNECT's work is based on the valuing principle that recognizes all parents as teachers and leaders regardless of economic condition or background.

What is the model of parental involvement RE-CONNECT will use?
RE-CONNECT will follow an innovative model of parent involvement developed by IDRA that goes beyond the standard approach to parental involvement. National studies and research support understandings of parents as teachers, parents as resources, and parents as decision-makers. IDRA builds upon these and expands upon traditional approaches by emphasizing parents as leaders and as trainers of other parent leaders.

Who does RE-CONNECT serve?
RE-CONNECT serves parents of children age birth through 5 and parents of school-age children.

What does the program emphasize?
A primary focus for RE-CONNECT is families of pre-school children ages birth through 5 and parents of school-age children. Also, the center will make special efforts to reach low-income, minority and limited-English-proficient parents. Some of the tools to be used by the project for its support activities will include: parent-to-parent training, a hot line, an interactive web site and a referral network for parents based upon local priorities.

As a result, RE-CONNECT will do the following:

- ✓ Increase the number and types of partnerships between parents and schools.
- ✓ Increase parents' awareness of educational issues.
- ✓ Establish and expand upon parent support services provided through Parents as Teachers (PAT) and Home Instruction Programs for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) (see next two pages).
- ✓ Develop and sustain partnerships and networks with other organizations, agencies and parent centers.

What impact will RE-CONNECT have?
RE-CONNECT expects the following results:

- ✓ Improved levels of parent involvement in their children's schools.
- ✓ Increased support to schools to develop strategies for encouraging ongoing parental involvement.
- ✓ Increased numbers of parents participating in training sessions.
- ✓ Increased parent involvement in educational decision-making.
- ✓ Increased parental awareness of education issues.
- ✓ New and strengthened partnerships between school, home and community.
- ✓ Greater access to information for parents.
- ✓ The development and use of materials that are culturally and linguistically appropriate.

How can I learn more about RE-CONNECT?
Additional information about RE-CONNECT is available through IDRA:

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The project directors at IDRA are Aurelio M. Montemayor, M.Ed., and Frances M. Guzmán, M.Ed.

IDRA is an independent, non-profit organization, directed by María Robledo Montecel, Ph.D., dedicated to creating schools that work for all children. As a vanguard leadership development and research team for more than 26 years, IDRA has worked with people to create self-renewing schools that value and empower all children, families and communities. IDRA conducts research and development activities, creates, implements and administers innovative education programs and provides teacher, administrator, and parent training and technical assistance.

RE-CONNECT Connection...

Parents as Teachers

A Home-School Partnership That Works

Parents as Teachers (PAT) is an early childhood parent education and family support program designed to help all parents give their children the best possible start in life.

The Parent as Teachers Support System

This home-school-community partnership provides parents with information in child development from age birth to 5 and suggests learning opportunities that encourage language and intellectual growth, physical and social skills. Parents as Teachers is a voluntary primary prevention program that offers the following.

Personal Visits – Personalized home visits by certified parent educators, trained in child development, help parents understand what to expect in each stage of their child's development, and offer practical ways to encourage learning, manage challenging behavior, and promote strong parent-child relationships.

Group Meetings – Parents get together to gain new insights and to share their experiences, common concerns and successes. Group meetings also provide families the opportunity to participate in parent-child activities.

Screening – Parents as Teachers offers periodic screening of overall development, language, hearing and vision. The goal is to provide early detection of potential problems to prevent difficulties later in school.

Resource Network – Families are helped to access other community services that are beyond the scope of the Parents as Teachers program.

Evaluation Findings

Numerous independent evaluations have shown the following results for families participating in Parents as Teachers.

- PAT children at age 3 are significantly more advanced than comparison children in language, problem solving and other cognitive abilities and social development.
- PAT parents are more involved in their children's schooling – parental involvement is highly related to a child's success in school.
- The positive impact on PAT children carries over into the elementary school years; PAT children score higher on kindergarten readiness tests and standardized measures of reading, math and language in early grades.
- PAT parents are confident in their parenting skills and knowledge; they read more to their child – a key factor in preparing children for school success.

Adaptations

Adaptability is the key to the success of Parents as Teachers. While it is a national model with cutting-edge curriculum and a professional training program, it is truly a local program. As shown in the findings of Parents as Teachers evaluation studies and lessons learned from the field, the program is adaptable to the needs of broadly diverse families, cultures and special populations.

Parents as Teachers programs are part of many Even Start and other federal Title I programs, as well as Early Head Start and Head Start. Parents as Teachers in the Child Care Center enhances the quality of infant/toddler care and the parent-caregiver relationship. Parents as Teachers for Teen Parents offers instruction and guidance to help teen parents with the difficult challenge of raising a child. Corporations offer Parents as Teachers for employees as an investment in the present and future workforce.

Funding

Program funding is often a combination of federal, state, and local dollars, and private monies. Federal funds include Goals 2000, Title I, Even Start and Head Start.

Parents as Teachers National Center, Inc.

The Parents as Teachers National Center, Inc., is a not-for-profit organization that provides Parents as Teachers training and technical assistance, certification of Parents as Teachers parent educators, curriculum and materials development and adaptation, research and evaluation coordination, and international conferences. The center also engages in public policy initiatives that promote family support and parent education.

Born to Learn Curriculum

Through collaboration with neuroscientists from the Washington University School of Medicine, St. Louis, Missouri, the Parent as Teachers National Center, Inc., has developed the *Born to Learn* curriculum. Combining neuroscience information on how a baby's brain develops and expertise from early childhood educators, the *Born to Learn* curriculum translates neuroscience research into concrete advice that supports parents in giving their children the best possible start in life. This neuroscience-infused curriculum includes detailed monthly, bi-weekly and weekly personal visit plans, child development information for parents, suggested parent-child activities and resource materials for parent educators and parents. It also features, for the first time, a 16-part video series keyed to specific personal visit plans. The *Born to Learn* curriculum became the standard PAT *Prenatal to Three* curriculum in 1999.

Parents as Teachers Training

The Parents as Teachers National Center, Inc., provides institutes at specified locations throughout the United States and on-site by special arrangement.

National Honors

Parents as Teachers has received numerous national honors. It received the 1997 APPLE Pie award in recognition for support of parent involvement in education from *Working Mother* magazine, Partnership for Family Involvement in Education and Teachers College, Columbia University. It was also accepted into the U.S. Department of Education National Diffusion Network in 1991, signifying that the program had provided convincing evidence of its effectiveness.

Elaine Shiver, director, Parents as Teachers Program, Mental Health Association in Texas, 3952 Royal Lane Suite 261, Dallas, Texas 75230, phone 214/363-8661, fax 214/363-8664, e-mail txpat@txpat.org, web site: www.txpat.org

RE-CONNECT Connection...

HIPPY USA

Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters

The Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) is a home-based, early intervention program that helps parents create experiences for their children that lay the foundation for success in school and later life. The program is designed specifically for those parents who may not feel confident in their own abilities to teach their children. In the United States, HIPPY is a two-year or three-year program for parents with children ages 3, 4 and 5.

Every other week paraprofessionals who are also participants in the program make home visits to role play HIPPY activities with parents. On alternating weeks, group meetings are held. During group meetings, paraprofessionals and parents role play the week's activities, and enrichment activities are offered, including issues of parenting and family life and often addressing parents' interests in improving their own situation through further education and training. Parents spend approximately 15 to 20 minutes a day, five days a week, doing HIPPY activities with their children.

How does the curriculum work?

HIPPY activities are written in a structured format comparable to a well-designed lesson plan for a novice teacher. The purpose of the structure is to assure that activities will be easy and fun for parents to implement and to create a successful learning experience between the parents and the child. The curriculum is primarily cognitively-based, focusing on language development, problem solving and discrimination skills. Learning and play mingle throughout HIPPY activities, as parents help children build school readiness skills.

HIPPY utilizes role playing as the method of instruction when training paraprofessionals and parents. Role playing promotes a comfortable learning environment in which there is always room for mistakes. In addition to maximizing parents' understanding in doing the activities, it promotes parental empathy for developmental capabilities of young children.

What are the staffing requirements?

Each program has one full-time, professional coordinator who is responsible for all aspects of program implementation and management. This includes recruitment, training and supervision of paraprofessionals, administrative tasks, working with the advisors and fund raising. Coordinators have backgrounds in early childhood education, elementary education, adult education, social work and community development.

Paraprofessionals, who are members of the participating communities and themselves parents in the program, conduct the home visits. They work part-time with 10 to 15 families. Becoming a paraprofessional is often a first job and a first step out of dependency.

Where is HIPPY implemented?

HIPPY is one discrete component of a comprehensive approach to supporting families. As such, HIPPY is operated within the context of larger organizations that offer an array of services for families. Successful HIPPY settings include centers and community-based agencies.

What does HIPPY cost?

Costs are approximately $1,000 to $1,500 per child per year over two years. This is based on an average program size of 60 families in the first year and 120 families in the second year, a full-time coordinator and one paraprofessional for 12 families. Costs include staff salaries (the largest and most valuable component); curriculum materials; fees for training and technical assistance, program development, and license and affiliation; and other direct costs.

How are HIPPY programs funded?

While funding is frequently the greatest obstacle to starting and maintaining a HIPPY program, programs around the country have been successful in securing support from public and private sources at local, state and national levels. Funding has been provided through early childhood education initiatives including Title I (Chapter I), Even Start, Head Start, job training programs (particularly JTPA), public housing initiatives, a myriad of prevention and early intervention programs (such as child abuse prevention, teen pregnancy prevention, and crime prevention) and foundations, businesses and civic organizations. Also, the federally-funded RE-CONNECT parent information and resource center at the Intercultural Development Research Association will establish and expand upon parent support services provided through HIPPY in Texas.

Is there research on HIPPY?

Extensive research in Israel, HIPPY's country of origin, indicates that HIPPY benefits children by improving academic achievement and adjustment to school, reducing the need for children to repeat grades and increasing the rate of school completion. Positive impacts on parents include increases in involvement in their children's education, higher self-esteem and further education for themselves. The first systematic evaluation of HIPPY in the United States, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, is currently being conducted by the NCJW Center for the Child. Preliminary findings of the first grade teacher ratings suggest that participation in HIPPY may have a positive effect on children's classroom adaptation, an important component of school success. Other U.S. research includes several case studies that focus on implementation.

How do I get started?

The development of a HIPPY program combines strong grassroots community collaboration, securing funding and ongoing dialog with HIPPY USA. The *HIPPY USA Start-Up Manual* provides a step-by-step guide to beginning a program. It includes information on conducting a community needs assessment, developing and convening an advisory group, submitting an application, preparing a budget and hiring staff. HIPPY USA's *Guide to Fund Raising* describes potential funding sources and provides "cut and paste" proposal elements. A variety of outreach materials are also available.

HIPPY Texas, Carla Weir, 114 Cliffdale Avenue, Dallas, Texas 75211, phone 214-337-4868, e-mail: carlaweir@usa.net

IDRA Content Area Program Enhancement:

A Contribution for Limited-English-Proficient Students

Felix Montes, Ph.D.

The number of limited-English-proficient (LEP) students is increasing nationwide. According to a survey of state education agencies conducted by the National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) for the Office for Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA), the total number of LEP students enrolled in public and non-public schools reached 3,184,696 students in the 1994-95 school year, a 4.8 percent increase from the previous year (Macias and Kelly, 1996).

According to the same survey, Texas has the second largest enrollment of LEP students in the country. There were 514,139 LEP students enrolled in Texas public schools in 1996-97, which is 13 percent of all the students in the state. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) reports that 11.9 percent of the state's students participated in bilingual or English as a second language (ESL) programs (1999). This amounted to 463,134 students for the school year 1997-98.

An analysis of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), a high stakes state-mandated test, shows that the gap between the percentage of LEP students who passed the test and non-LEP students who passed increased with the grade level (TEA, 1998). At the secondary level, the gap ranges from 42 percentage points to 48 percentage points in sixth and 10th grades, respectively. Likewise, the percentage of LEP students passing the 1997 TAAS decreased markedly as these students progressed through the grade levels. In the third grade, 60 percent of LEP students passed the test compared to only 22 percent in the 10th grade. These findings suggest a systematic weeding out of LEP students from the educational system, with the well-known consequences in social problems and economic losses.

Part of the problem is a severe shortage of bilingual and ESL certified teachers, from kindergarten to the 12th grade. Seventy-four districts in Texas alone reported needing more than 2,000 additional bilingual/ESL teachers (TEA, 1998). State policy requires districts to assign bilingual/ESL teachers to the lower grades when there is a shortage. As a result, higher-grade instruction for LEP students is inadequate in many school districts. This what the IDRA Content Area Program Enhancement (CAPE) project attempted to help ameliorate.

Content Area Program Enhancement Project

The CAPE project is an initiative of the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) in collaboration with a predominantly Hispanic (96 percent) school district in south Texas. In this school district, one of every four students enrolled is LEP, and virtually all (93.4 percent) of its more than 14,000 students are economically disadvantaged.

CAPE is a teacher training program developed by IDRA and is based on the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA). CAPE was funded by the U.S. Department of Education to serve LEP students at the intermediate level. CALLA focuses on teaching learning strategies in cooperative settings to accelerate the acquisition of language skills and academic content. Based on the work of Jim Cummins (1980; 1981) and Virginia P. Collier (1987; 1989), CALLA is supported by a strong research base in the areas of cognition and metacognition (Anderson, 1976; Gagné, 1985) and second language research (O'Malley, Chamot and Kupper, 1989). According to this research, CALLA can help teachers meet the academic needs of three types of students:

- Those who have English communicative ability, but who are unable to use English as a tool for acquiring academic content;
- Those who have acquired academic concepts in their native language, but who need help in transferring them to English; and
- Those who are English dominant bilinguals and have not acquired academic language skills in their home language.

The *CALLA Handbook* by Chamot and O'Malley (1994) provides a comprehensive presentation of the CALLA approach in an accessible format. When this new pedagogy is applied, the classroom looks very different from the traditional model both physically and behaviorally, as instruction becomes more student-centric. The box below outlines the anticipated changes in instructional practices once the CAPE approach is adopted.

CAPE Plus Research

CAPE Plus is a bilingual education, field-initiated research program also funded

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Changes in Instructional and Assessment Practices

Before CAPE Participation	After CAPE Participation
No assessment of prior knowledge when beginning instruction.	Assessment and activation of prior knowledge when beginning instruction.
Indirect or no instruction on cognitive and metacognitive learning strategies.	Direct instruction on cognitive and metacognitive learning strategies.
Teachers evaluate student progress.	Teachers and students evaluate student progress.
Expectations for student learning are hidden.	Expectations for student learning are made clear.
Evaluation of content area knowledge is confounded by language proficiency.	Evaluation of content area knowledge is kept separate from language proficiency levels.
Oral and written language issues relevant to content area knowledge and skills are ignored.	Oral and written language issues relevant to content area knowledge and skills are identified and incorporated into instruction.

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by the U.S. Department of Education. It assessed the degree to which the classrooms in the CAPE project provided more appropriate instruction for LEP students than non-CAPE classrooms as measured by student performance. Thus, CAPE Plus investigated whether or not participating in CAPE project classrooms improved the achievement of LEP students.

The design compared the performance of LEP students in sixth through eighth grades in the project classrooms with similar students in non-project classrooms at three middle school campuses. The design required several sources of data. Student scores on the TAAS were collected on a pre-test and post-test basis for both the program and non-program groups. This allowed the assessment of any significant difference attributable to the project. In addition, several qualitative data sources were used to allow for a better understanding of the project's impact on the students, teachers and schools. A set of in-depth interviews with the team leaders and other teachers was conducted to clarify issues of implementation and comfort and to help interpret some of the findings from the other analyses. School principals and instructional facilitators were also interviewed in-depth to understand the impact of the project on the school as a whole.

Technical Assistance

IDRA provided technical assistance that consisted of numerous interactive training sessions including in-service training for all teachers in a central location, classroom demonstrations and summer institutes. During the in-service training, the teachers were exposed to the various CALLA strategies, interdisciplinary unit planning, using technology in the classroom and other relevant topics. In subsequent sessions, IDRA staff demonstrated how to use these strategies in actual classrooms. This cycle of training and demonstration occurred throughout the project duration.

Each summer, participants attended a week-long institute. The institute provided an opportunity to review in a relatively short time the various CALLA strategies sponsored by the project, to reflect about the progress made so far and to plan for the next set of activities.

Teachers were organized in teams and worked collaboratively to apply the CAPE strategies, review their effectiveness and provide mutual support. IDRA provided more than 100 person-days of technical assistance. About 80 percent of this time was spent working directly with the teachers. The rest was used to plan and coordinate the project with the district and schools.

Results: Administrators' Perspective

The support from the administrators to smooth out the implementation of the project was crucial. Principals and instructional facilitators who provided the teachers with institutional support and a safe place to experiment with the new techniques were more satisfied with the project results. These administrators knew what the project was attempting to accomplish.

One principal stated:

> I feel that teachers have to have as many tools as they can to reach out to students. They all have different learning styles. When we had our first meeting, I could see that the proposed strategies would be useful to teach the students.

Administrators faced difficult issues that confronted the program implementation. Perhaps the most problematic issue was what they called "the pull out problem." They recognized the need for teachers to participate in program activities but were concerned about pulling them out of the classroom. One problem that was immediately apparent was the lack of substitute teachers to cover for the participating teachers. The district maintains a pool of substitute teachers, and when many teachers from the various schools were absent, the pool was depleted, and some schools could not get enough substitutes.

Some solutions to this problem were found and implemented. They included scheduling training on Saturdays and after class as well as organizing summer institutes. But the best alternative was part of the program itself: in-class demonstrations. Principals and instructional facilitators were very impressed by these demonstrations because fewer substitutes were needed and because of the intrinsically practical nature of these demonstrations.

One principal commented:

> The actual demonstrations are invaluable tools that seldom get used. It is very time intensive and costly in subtle ways, but it is very important to see these strategies work or not work with your own students. And sometimes even the presenters might have a problem with certain students. And that is where they can monitor and adjust, and the teachers can learn. That makes for a good relationship between the teachers and presenters. The demos are really special.

Administrators indicated that they had witnessed how the teachers were enthusiastic about the program and the results they were observing in their own students. They saw it as valuable and were appreciative of the potential benefits the program had for the students.

Results: Teachers' Perspective

Most teachers felt that the program was beneficial to the students. Below are some of the benefits the teachers indicated the program generated.

- It provided tools that helped in reaching a much broader range of students.
- It brought fresh ideas that research has shown work with students.
- It allowed the research to move forward in the actual field so we know what works.
- It provided lessons for students who speak a different language and provided them with a way of feeling more secure in learning new material.
- It was useful for social studies, reading, language arts and even in science and mathematics.
- It taught strategies that involved language acquisition and content vocabulary that was easier for students to relate to.

An important aspect of the program was an expected impact on the students' TAAS scores. Teachers were asked if they thought that the program had improved the chances of passing this state-mandated test among the students involved. Below is a summary of what they said.

- It did improve their chances of passing the TAAS. When IDRA staff came, they demonstrated how to implement learning strategies with the students that would get them to participate. Through these strategies, teachers encouraged students to start thinking. Teachers used the strategies extensively in their teaching process.
- The language barrier seemed less formidable. The project gave LEP students the opportunity to learn English. But the TAAS requires you to know English, to know skills and to know how to decipher information. They are still on level one, learning English. Eventually, with the project, they will pass the TAAS.

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- Anti-social promotion bandwagon
- Use of technology case study

Volume XXVI, No. 5, May
- New network of parents
- Two-way bilingual education
- The voucher debate
- Characteristics of safe schools

Volume XXVI, No. 6, June-July
- Activities for youth leadership
- Reading strategies
- Litigation on vouchers
- Appropriate language instruction

Volume XXVI, No. 7, August
- Strategies for teacher collaboration
- Bilingual teacher preparation
- Advanced skills instruction
- Upcoming events

Volume XXVI, No. 8, September
- Changes in evaluation
- Limited-English-proficient trends in Texas
- Immigrant student's rights to attend school
- Early childhood education event

Volume XXVI, No. 9, October
- Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program gets results
- Dropout and attrition rates worsen in Texas
- Immigrant education collaborative
- Early childhood education event
- National dropout prevention conference

Volume XXVI, No. 10, November-December
- Educating a new generation
- Comprehensive school reform
- New parent information and resource center
- Content area program enhancement

IDRA is a nonprofit educational, research and development organization dedicated to the improvement of education opportunities of all children. Through research, materials development, training, technical assistance, evaluation, and information dissemination, we're helping to create schools that work for all children.

1998 and 1999 Reading TLI

CAPE and Non-CAPE Classrooms, All Students and Subgroups – Descriptive Demographics and Tests of Significance

Sample	Year	CAPE Classrooms				Non-CAPE Classrooms				F-Test
		N	Mean	SD	t-test	N	Mean	SD	t-test	
All Students	1998	985	64.72	30.28	6.36*	618	64.71	29.70	3.67*	2.20
	1999		69.87	26.57			68.44	28.34		
LEP	1998	177	44.32	32.16	5.26*	100	51.67	28.92	2.19*	0.68
	1999		56.06	29.11			57.21	28.16		
At Risk	1998	637	63.40	27.31	4.57*	436	62.04	28.30	3.08*	1.82
	1999		67.95	24.44			65.73	27.15		
LEP and At Risk	1998	126	50.23	28.44	3.35*	85	54.09	27.79	2.10*	5.27*
	1999		59.21	25.35			60.72	26.26		

* Difference is statistically significant at least at the p ≤ .05.

CAPE – continued from page 8

- For the writing and reading it will help. For the math it would help with reading the problem and with problem solving skills and knowing what to do to solve the problem.
- The CAPE project has allowed the students to have a better foundation with language so they do not fear the reading as much. It has given them a level of comfort. Teachers approached the material from different angles in different ways, including paired reading, oral reading, teacher modeled reading and so forth. They no longer have that fear. Their reading scores were very good on the pre-TAAS (mid- to high-70s). We are hoping to hit the 80s in TAAS in reading. Everything began to click this year.

Since these teachers were representing other participating teachers in their respective schools, it was important to know what these teachers knew about the other teachers' preferences regarding the strategies sponsored by the project. In this spirit, IDRA asked them about the CAPE strategies the other teachers on their team had suggested seemed to work best for them and their students. Definition diagonals, shared reading and other learning strategies were effective for different teachers depending on their students and subject matter.

Results: Students' Perspective

The most relevant aspect of this research was finding out whether CAPE would make any difference in student performance as measured by a standardized instrument such as the TAAS. To answer this question, the project compared the performance of all students, including LEP students, in the project classrooms with similar students in non-project classrooms at three middle school campuses. Two

CAPE – continued on page 10

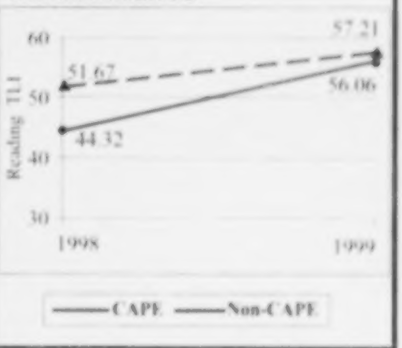
1998 and 1999 Mathematics TLI

CAPE and Non-CAPE Classrooms, All Students and Subgroups – Descriptive Demographics and Tests of Significance

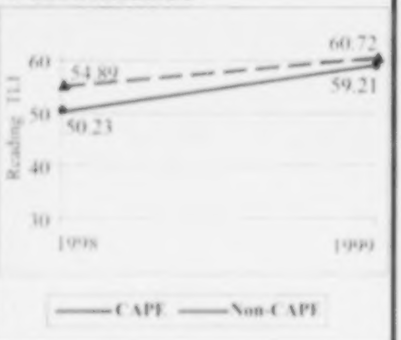
Sample	Year	CAPE Classrooms				Non-CAPE Classrooms				F-Test
		N	Mean	SD	t-test	N	Mean	SD	t-test	
All Students	1998	985	64.72	26.75	4.73*	618	64.55	28.66	2.09*	1.99
	1999		68.04	25.09			66.66	27.50		
LEP	1998	177	46.46	33.22	3.96*	100	55.35	30.15	1.27	0.54
	1999		55.59	30.56			58.71	28.45		
At Risk	1998	637	63.84	25.98	2.87*	436	62.75	27.58	1.42	3.23
	1999		66.65	23.92			64.48	26.67		
LEP and At Risk	1998	126	53.21	29.42	2.15*	85	59.56	28.10	1.02	6.95*
	1999		59.14	26.61			62.55	25.62		

* Difference is statistically significant at least at the p ≤ .05.

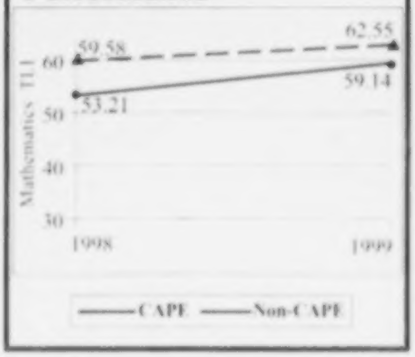
CAPE and Non-CAPE LEP Student Performance



CAPE and Non-CAPE LEP and At-Risk Student Performance



CAPE and Non-CAPE LEP and At-Risk Student Performance



CAPE *– continued from page 9*

dependent variables were used: the Reading Texas Learning Index (Reading TLI) and the Mathematics Texas Learning Index (Mathematics TLI). These two indexes, derived from the TAAS, are the best indicators of whether the students are on target to pass the TAAS at the end of their high school year (see boxes on Page 9).

A General Linear Model (GLM) with repeated measures was used to investigate the effects of CAPE instruction on the student Reading TLI scores, the dependent variable. The GLM analyzes groups of related dependent variables that represent different measurements of the same attribute. This model allows for comparisons of within-subjects and between-subjects factors. The within-subjects factors in our current application are the pre-test and post-test measures of the Reading TLI scores. The between-subjects factors included the various conditions that subdivided the whole sample into sub-groups. The chief between-subjects factor was whether the students were in a CAPE or non-CAPE classroom. Other between-subjects factors analyzed included LEP and at risk conditions. The boxes above show the resulting means and tests of significance resulting from the statistical analysis.

There is a clear trend indicating that the project contributed to the improvement of CAPE students' chances of passing the TAAS. For example, CAPE LEP student scores showed a larger improvement than did non-CAPE LEP student scores, as shown in the box. The gap between the two groups was 7.35 points. By 1999, the gap was reduced to only 1.15 points.

There was one explicit indicator that corroborates the sense that the project was most effective in reaching those students who most needed this kind of instruction, that is, those who are both LEP and at risk of dropping out. While both groups registered significant gains, the CAPE group average gain was significantly larger than that of the non-CAPE group, thus virtually eliminating the gap between them (see above). This supports the perception of teachers and administrators that CAPE was beneficial for all students, especially for the LEP students.

A similar GLM model was used to investigate the effects of CAPE instruction on the student Mathematics TLI scores. Analysis of the Mathematics TLI strongly suggests that CAPE instruction had an important and positive contribution to the students' chances of passing the TAAS. All CAPE groups under analysis obtained statistically significant gains from 1998 to 1999. For the non-CAPE groups, the opposite was the case. Virtually none had statistically significant gains.

The CAPE research program was designed to investigate whether the CALLA-based CAPE approach to teaching had a beneficial effect on LEP students' performance as measured by the high stakes standardized test TAAS. The research found that in fact it did. Using the reading and Mathematics TLI, the research found significant differences between CAPE and non-CAPE classrooms for LEP students who are also at risk of dropping out of school. These indexes are the best indicators of whether the students are on target to pass the TAAS.

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Texas Schools have Support for Comprehensive School Reform

Adela Solís, Ph.D.

There is yet another source of aid for schools struggling to make widespread changes. For almost two years, school districts across the country have been implementing school reform efforts with assistance from the federally-funded Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) program. Some Texas schools have been receiving CSRD assistance since the spring of this year (1999).

The CSRD was signed into law in November 1997. Sponsored by Representatives David Obey (D-Wisc.) and John Porter (R-Ill.), the "Obey-Porter" legislation (administered by the U.S. Department of Education) provides funding to help schools adopt successful, research-based comprehensive school reform models. This three-year program supplied about $150 million to state education agencies to issue grants to school districts to conduct this type of school reform. Most of the funds ($120 million) were available for Title I schools.

Purpose of the CSRD Program

The U.S. Department of Education delineates the purpose of CSRD as a program to provide financial incentives for schools (particularly Title I schools) that need to substantially improve student achievement to implement comprehensive school reform programs that are based on reliable research and effective practices and that include an emphasis on basic academics and parental involvement. These programs are intended to stimulate schoolwide change covering virtually all aspects of school operations, rather than a piecemeal, fragmented approach to reform.

Thus, to be considered comprehensive, a program must coherently integrate specific components listed in the legislation. Through supporting comprehensive school reform, the program aims to enable all children in the schools served, particularly low-achieving children, to meet challenging state content and student performance standards.

Comprehensive school reform programs integrate all nine of the following components.

Effective, research-based methods and strategies – A comprehensive school reform program employs innovative strategies and proven methods for student learning, teaching, and school management that are based on reliable research and effective practices and that have been replicated successfully in schools with diverse characteristics.

Comprehensive design with aligned components – The program has a comprehensive design for effective school functioning (including instruction, assessment, classroom management, professional development, parental involvement, and school management). It aligns the school's curriculum, technology and professional development into a schoolwide reform plan to enable all students (including children from low-income families, children with limited English proficiency and children with disabilities) to meet challenging state content and performance standards and that addresses needs identified through a school needs assessment.

Professional development – The program provides high-quality and continuous teacher and staff professional development and training.

Measurable goals and benchmarks – A comprehensive school reform program has measurable goals for student performance tied to the state's challenging content and student performance standards, as those standards are implemented, and benchmarks for meeting the goals.

Support within the school – The program is supported by school faculty, administrators and staff.

Parental and community involvement – The program provides for the meaningful involvement of parents and the local community in planning and implementing school improvement activities.

External technical support and assistance – A comprehensive reform program utilizes high-quality external support and assistance from a comprehensive school reform entity – which may be a university – with experience or expertise in schoolwide reform and improvement.

Evaluation strategies – The program includes a plan for evaluating implementation of school reforms and the student results achieved.

Coordination of resources – The program identifies how other resources (federal, state, local and private) available to the school will be utilized to coordinate services to support and sustain the school reform.

CSRD Program in Texas

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) coordinates the CSRD program in Texas, including the awarding of grants to schools. These competitive grants are referred to as Improving Teaching and Learning (ITL) grants. They were awarded in early spring 1999. Schools began implementing their programs on March 1, 1999, and are expected to continue through June 30, 2000.

Information from TEA indicates that 137 campuses in 31 school districts were awarded grants: 62 are elementary schools, 51 are middle schools, and 24 are high schools. Over 90 percent of the schools are Title I schoolwide campuses.

The following school reform models are being implemented:

- Accelerated Schools Project,
- Coalition of Essential Schools,
- Co-NECT,
- Core Knowledge Foundation,
- Edison Project,
- Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound,
- Modern Red Schoolhouse,
- Roots and Wings, and
- Success for All.

A number of schools also are implementing locally developed models, which is permitted by the program.

STAR Center Assistance

The STAR Center is the comprehensive regional assistance center funded by

Texas Schools – continued on page 12

Texas Schools - continued from page 11

the U.S. Department of Education to serve Texas. It provides technical assistance to Texas school districts to help implement school reform within Title I schoolwide programs. The CSRD program was designed to support in a *coordinated fashion* comprehensive education improvement strategies to enable all children – including children from low-income families, children with limited English proficiency, and children with disabilities – to reach challenging academic standards. *Thus, coordination is particularly important between Title I schoolwide programs and the CSRD program.*

Schoolwide Planning

Schools participating in the CSRD program in Texas (i.e., those implementing ITL grants) may take advantage of STAR Center assistance that is available to all Title I schoolwide campuses in schoolwide planning. This service is assisting school districts and campuses to plan, develop and revise schoolwide plans, as required by statute. Schools may also utilize *A Toolkit for Assessing and Revising the Integrated Campus Improvement and Title I Schoolwide Plan*. This document may be obtained through the STAR Center or through the Title I or school support team coordinator at an education service center.

Awareness Sessions on Reform Goals

Upon request, the STAR Center can provide sessions to campus and district level school personnel to address principles of school reform inherent in the *Improving America's Schools Act* of 1994 (which funds the Title I program) and their relationship to the school reform models being implemented in their schools.

Assessing Success of CSRD

A survey of low performing campuses awarded ITL grants revealed a need for guidance in evaluating their implementation of school reforms and the achievement of student results. To this end, the STAR Center is preparing a workbook for assessing and reporting progress in school reform. The intent is to give Texas schools a tool to more easily map their strategies, critically assess their progress, make needed adjustments, and prepare the evaluation report as required by TEA.

Assessing Success of CSRD with Special Populations

The STAR Center will soon provide a report on the success of CSRD programs in addressing the needs of limited-English-proficient, migrant, homeless, Title I, and disadvantaged students and the degree of impact these reform models have on the achievement of these students, as reported by the model developers. This information is intended for use by local education agencies in selecting the research-based model that is most appropriately aligned with the unique characteristics of the student population.

Information on STAR Center support may be obtained by contacting the STAR Center at 1-888-FYI-STAR.

The 10 educational laboratories also have received CSRD funds to provide information and support to schools in selecting, designing, implementing and evaluating reform programs. The Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) in Austin provides services to Texas schools. The SEDL web site and that of other regional laboratories can be accessed via the STAR Center web site (www.starcenter.org).

Program information also is available from TEA's web site (www.tea.state.us/student.support/csrd) or by calling the division of student support programs (512/463-9374).

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New Generation - continued from page 3

the development of individual capacity and competency. They use a variety of meaningful activities to convey increasing levels of content. They appreciate their students' cultural and intellectual assets, and they inspire a new generation to succeed. We all certainly need good teachers.

I am happy to report that after four months with her new teacher, Ariel is very excited about going to school. She is thrilled to share with me some of the wonderful experiences she lives in her classroom. I am excited too. Every week, I receive a "highlights of the week" page from her teacher in which she tells us in advance what will be happening in class the following week. I hope all children can have the same kinds of thrills in school.

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¿Ya Será Hora? (Is It Time?)

by Alejo Salinas, Jr., Ph.D.

Superintendent of Schools, Hidalgo Independent School District

¿Ya Será Hora? (Is It Time?) documents the history, culture, customs and family values of Hispanics in an economically depressed setting. While written for a general audience *¿Ya Será Hora? (Is It Time?)* is intended for junior high school and high school students. Historical facts combined with cultural and social customs serve to memorialize a bygone era. Dr. Salinas tells stories of his life experiences starting at about age four. He traces the foundations and family values of Hispanics and their struggles in an isolated part of Starr County, Texas. The success of so many individuals who grew up at *La Reforma* and surrounding areas help relate a positive experience.

All proceeds from the sale of this book are being donated to the Hidalgo ISD Permanent Scholarship Foundation. Copies are available through the Hidalgo ISD Permanent Scholarship Foundation, P.O. Drawer D, Hidalgo, Texas 78557 ($15 plus $1.50 shipping and handling). *¿Ya Será Hora? (Is It Time?)* is the first in a series of books by Dr. Salinas. It will be followed by Volume II, *¿Que Sera, Sera?*; Volume III, *Strive for the Best*; and Volume IV, *¡Si Se Puede!*

HIGHLIGHTS OF RECENT IDRA ACTIVITIES

In September, IDRA worked with **9,398** teachers, administrators and parents through **90** training and technical assistance activities and **187** program sites in **15** states plus the United Kingdom and Brazil. Topics included:

- Instructional Technology for Second Language Learners
- Spanish Literacy Development (training of trainers)
- High Expectations
- Reading Success Network
- School Equity and Improvement
- Prevention and Recovery of Dropouts

Participating agencies and school districts included:

- Washington, D.C., Public Schools
- Temple Independent School District (ISD), Texas
- Cobre Consolidated School District, New Mexico
- Atlanta Public Schools, Georgia
- La Joya ISD, Texas
- Sam Houston State University, Texas

Activity Snapshot

Evaluation is crucial to implementing a program and to making it better as it goes along. IDRA's Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program has a 15-year track record of success that has been supported by rigorous evaluation. Evaluation of the program consists of quantitative and qualitative measures including school life scores; grades in mathematics, reading and English; achievement test scores; disciplinary action referrals; and absenteeism rates. A pre-test and post-test design measure the program's effect on tutors' perceived self-concept, language proficiency, aspirations and expectations, feelings of belonging in school, and relationships with family members. The data is collected throughout the school year through surveys, formal observations and in-depth interviews. This past school year, the program has 171 participating sites. During the summer, IDRA processed more than 25,000 surveys and evaluation forms. End-of-year evaluation reports were then provided to all program sites to inform them of the program's effect on students and to assist them in making any needed improvements in implementation for next year.

Regularly, IDRA staff provides services to:

- public school teachers
- parents
- administrators
- other decision makers in public education

Services include:

- training and technical assistance
- evaluation
- serving as expert witnesses in policy settings and court cases
- publishing research and professional papers, books, videos and curricula

For information on IDRA services for your school district or other group, contact IDRA at 210/444-1710.

Seventh Annual

IDRA *La Semana del Niño*

Early Childhood Educators Institute™

"Educating a New Generation"

Mark your calendar: April 25-27, 2000 · San Antonio Airport Hilton

Join us for the Seventh Annual IDRA *La Semana del Niño* Early Childhood Educators Institute as we celebrate and get ready to teach a new generation of children.

Plenary and Concurrent Sessions

The institute offers a valuable series of information-packed professional development concurrent sessions that are customized to the varied needs of early childhood educators and administrators. Information on any additional sessions will be available at the institute. The topics for this years' institute include innovative instructional strategies, information about policy issues, and the latest research.

School Visits

Take this opportunity to visit model early childhood centers. School visits provide you with the opportunity to share ideas while seeing them in action. Institute participants will travel to high-performing, high-minority schools in the San Antonio area that are effectively working with diverse learners. Two school visits (one each on Wednesday and Thursday) are available to the first 150 institute registrants on a first come, first served basis. Transportation will be provided.

Institute Sponsors

IDRA is pleased to bring you this Seventh Annual IDRA *La Semana del Niño* Early Childhood Educators Institute. Supporting IDRA projects include:

- IDRA *South Central Collaborative for Equity* (the equity assistance center that serves Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas) and
- *STAR Center* (the comprehensive regional assistance center that serves Texas via a collaboration of IDRA, the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin, and RMC Research Corporation).

Each of these IDRA projects provides specialized training and technical assistance to public schools. Information on how your campus can use these resources to improve instruction and assessment will be available at the institute and may also be obtained by calling IDRA at 210/444-1710 or by visiting IDRA's web site (www.idra.org).

Hotel Information

The institute will be held at the San Antonio Airport Hilton. The hotel is offering a special rate of $95 per night for a single or double room (plus state and local taxes), based on availability. The hotel reservation deadline for the reduced rate is April 10, 2000. Call 1-800-HILTONS to make reservations. Be sure to reference the Annual IDRA *La Semana del Niño* Early Childhood Educators Institute in order to qualify for the special rate.

Conference Topics...

Policy

- Early childhood education in the new century: Opportunities for all students
- The role of early childhood education in creating a nation of learners – reflecting on the national education goals

Literacy

- Including fantasy and imagination in the early childhood curriculum
- The language, the teacher and the child: Integrating a harmonious whole
- Creating literacy opportunities at home
- Effective instructional strategies for reluctant young readers

Social Development

- Children's literature: A tool to develop social skills in the early childhood classroom

Child Development

- Developing language, thoughts and values in the early childhood classroom

Multicultural Education

- The use of authentic literature in the classroom: Sharing our values

Curriculum

- Integrating fine arts in the early childhood program: A project approach

Play

- The child's right to play

Research

- Minority students: The latest research regarding their education and their opportunities
- Diversity in the classroom: Implications for the child

Classroom Management

- Managing learning centers

Seventh Annual IDRA *La Semana del Niño* Early Childhood Educators Institute™

Registration Form

YES I will attend the Seventh Annual IDRA *La Semana del Niño* Early Childhood Educators Institute on April 25-27, 2000. (Please use one form per person. Feel free to make copies of this form.)

Name ______________________

School or Organization ______________________

Title/Position ______________________

Address ______________________

City ____________ State ______ Zip ________

Telephone (   ) __________ Fax (   ) __________

E-mail ______________________

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Register **online** with a purchase order number at *www.idra.org*

Mail with a check or purchase order to IDRA at
5835 Callaghan Road, #350
San Antonio, TX 78228-1190
Attention: Carol Chavez

Fax with a purchase order to
IDRA at 210/444-1714
Attention: Carol Chavez

Fees

$175 Institute registration (includes institute sessions, Thursday luncheon and [for first 150 registrants] two school visits) – *$195 if after March 1, 2000*

Make payable to: Intercultural Development Research Association. A purchase order number may be used to reserve space. Full payment prior to the institute is expected.

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Alternative Education - *continued from page 2*

on student achievement.

Proponents of removing pupils from the regular school classroom and campus defended their recommendations with the proposition that the isolation of these pupils would help schools provide a quality educational program while they address the social and academic factors that caused the pupils to be removed from the regular classrooms. The auditor's report reveals that these programs – after several years of operation – have failed to prove that they have a positive educational benefit for the pupils referred.

This finding parallels IDRA's finding that DAEPs failed to collect and report critical data that would enable the state policy-makers and the general public to hold these programs accountable. The auditor's report cites specific areas where the state's alternative education programs are found wanting.

Insufficient Indicators for Measuring Progress and Gauging Long-term Effects

The state auditor found that TEA does not have data to show if most students in DAEPs are learning. The commission that oversees JJAEP operations has limited data that JJAEP students are improving in reading and math (not all students who should be tested are tested). TEA and the commission do not know how students perform once they return to their home campuses (and no one is gathering such data).

Alternative education programs would benefit from collecting consistent academic and behavior data during the students' tenure in the program, including data on graduation rates, courses passed, credits earned, GEDs completed, TAAS performance, attendance rates and dropout rates.

Incomplete and Inaccurate Data

The state auditor states that existing DAEP data should be cause for concern if it is to be useful in guiding further deliberations on the future of such programs. A major finding of the report was that one of the state's largest districts failed to submit any alternative education program data, which seriously delimits state-level statistics on the program. Another finding was that TEA data on JJAEP referrals was inaccurate and did not agree with the commission's data on the program. The auditor found that when districts had to specify information in reports, they tended to overuse the "other" code, suggesting that many were unclear about program requirements.

The overarching recommendation resulting from the auditor's analysis of these programs was that extensive additional training should be provided to school officials who are responsible for implementing the *Texas Safe Schools Act* requirements. Additionally, the auditor strongly recommended that more data be collected from these programs in order to assess their characteristics, as well as their impact and effectiveness. IDRA also recommended the collection of additional data on these programs.

The state auditor strongly recommended that more data be collected from these programs in order to assess their characteristics, as well as their impact and effectiveness.

Funding

The state auditor examined school district funding issues as they relate to alternative education programs. One concern that emerged was the finding that some schools reported students referred to JJAEPs as being enrolled in their home district – thus receiving funding for students not actually enrolled.

The auditor explains, "State law expressly states that a student served by a JJAEP on the basis of an expulsion for certain felonies is ineligible for Foundation School Program funding." Monies for these pupils are allocated through separate state funding provisions involving juvenile justice operations.

According to the report, school districts' lack of understanding of these provisions created widespread problems, including students generating monies for both the local district and the JJAEPs in which they were enrolled. In the 22 counties operating mandated JJAEPs, "18 reported [alternative education programs] students' attendance incorrectly."

According to the auditor's report, local districts may have to reimburse the state up to $1.4 million because of incorrect reporting in 1997-98. The amount may be larger if the problems persisted in 1998-99. The auditor recommends that TEA implement procedures to detect improper reporting of JJAEP students' attendance.

Unequal Accountability

An area in which the state auditor and IDRA differ relates to the state accountability of alternative education programs. While IDRA has long expressed concerns about the creation of a separate and unequal accountability system for alternative education programs, the auditor's report was mute on this point. In our own research, IDRA noted and reported that the state's alternative education programs were subjected to separate and less stringent accountability requirements. IDRA's findings lead to changes in state policies that were adopted in the 1999 session of the Texas legislature.

In a similar vein, preliminary findings that were shared with state policy-makers also contributed to some reforming of state alternative education policies and requirements. The extent to which these changes will actually inform future policies and, more importantly, lead to improved results for students referred to what too often resemble "satellite" operations remains to be seen. Those interested in ensuring that all pupils are afforded equal educational opportunities should continue to monitor alternative education programs very closely at both the local and state levels.

Resources

Cortez, A., and M. Robledo Montecel. *Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs in Texas – What is Known; What is Needed* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, 1999).

Office of the State Auditor. *A Report on Safe Schools Programs* (August 1999) Report No. 99-049.

Albert Cortez, Ph.D., is the director of the IDRA Institute of Policy and Leadership. Comments and questions may be directed to him via e-mail at contact@idra.org.

Copies of the state auditor's report may be requested from the Office of the State Auditor. IDRA's policy brief, "Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs: What is Known; What is Needed," can be obtained from IDRA ($7 each) or online at the IDRA web site, www.idra.org (no charge).

Profiles in Leadership Award

In early November, IDRA executive director Maria "Cuca" Robledo Montecel, Ph.D., was named a Profile in Leadership at a ceremony by the Mission City Business and Professional Women. Profiles in Leadership "recognizes the often unheralded contributions of some of San Antonio's most dedicated volunteers." Scarborough's Photography, Inc., unveiled individual portraits of this year's 12 award recipients.

Dr. Robledo Montecel was nominated for her leadership in creating the Coalition for Equity and Excellence in Public Education (a San Antonio coalition that advocates the use of public monies for public schooling) and for her role in creating the San Antonio Community Education Leadership Program to prepare and support a network of intercultural leaders who can work collaboratively and effectively across agency systems within diverse local communities. The Profiles in Leadership is in its fourth year of sponsorship by the Mission City Business and Professional Women to celebrate leaders in community issues and working women.

Community Advocate of the Year Award

IDRA senior education associate, Adela Solis, Ph.D., was named the 1999 Community Advocate of the Year by the Texas Association for Bilingual Education (TABE). She was presented the award at the TABE conference in October in Corpus Christi.

Dr. Solis began her career as a bilingual teacher in San Antonio. Her experience in education has extended for 20 years. At IDRA, she has worked with hundreds of teachers, administrators, school board members, parents and the community. She has extensive expertise in bilingual education and ESL instructional methods. Dr. Solis is active in a number of professional organizations and is an adjunct professor at the University of Texas San Antonio.

TABE is a state advocacy organization for the rights of language-minority children. Its network is composed of local school district and university student affiliate groups representing all major geographical regions of Texas. TABE members include parents, early childhood education personnel, elementary and secondary school teachers and administrators, college students, professors, and university researchers.

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